

# CHAMBERS'S

## Journal

JUNE  
1951

SOMEBODY'S HERO  
*Michael Jacot*

THE MAGIC PUTTER  
MEX TUTHILL

GALSWORTHY AT HOME  
R. H. MOTTRAM

TROOPING THE COLOUR  
Major T. J. EDWARDS

THE SINKING OF THE 'LANCASTRIA'  
H. DRUMMOND GAULD

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# Somebody's Hero

MICHAEL JACOT

DEVEREUX hardly noticed the arrival of Sen. He came through the jungle as softly as Jock's shadow—and just about as close. Sen and Jock lay panting beside Devereux on the ruined steps of the temple. Sen undid Jock's pack and let it fall on to the marble flags. He had carried it for him all the way from the crash. If Jock had been up to it, he might have cursed him for letting the pack bang down, but he was only half-alive. Not that Sen would have minded. Jock could curse him and treat him as the mood took him, and it only seemed to make Sen think more of the man.

Devereux used to watch them as they walked across the tarmac to the aircraft, the neat figure of the Indian stoically imitating the steps of his boss. Sen would polish Jock's great boots and see that he had what food he wanted. Jock used to tease him and tell him that if he used a certain kind of soap it would whiten his skin. Devereux remembered seeing the boy's eyes light up at this, for to be like Jock was what he wished for more than anything. It was the same when they worked throwing out the sacks of food to the troops in the jungle. He tried to use Jock's voice and language.

Sen sat watching Jock now, on his haunches, like a duck. He clutched the pack on his knees as if in reparation for throwing it down. The sun had almost disappeared, but there were long fingers of light still touching the valley. The air was warm and dank. Jock was all-out after the run. He turned his head and looked up at Devereux. He was scared. 'D'y' think they've spotted the kite yet?' he panted.

Devereux glanced across at the hill where they had left the burning aircraft. He could

just make out the nose crumpled against the trees at the edge of the hushed swamp. 'They may have. I don't know. How far do you think we've come?'

'Bout a mile, maybe more, as the crow flies—if they do fly in this confounded country.' Devereux smiled and Sen laughed. Devereux wondered if Sen really understood what Jock meant.

'It took us an hour,' Devereux stated.

'I keep thinking I hear them,' said Jock.

'We'd better wait here for a bit. No sense in getting lost. We can see the map again as soon as the sun rises. My guess is that we are about ten miles from the Irrawaddy. If we can make it, we're safe.'

'You don't think there's a chance of the boys. . . .'

'Yes,' replied Devereux, 'they'll come all right. But they can't pick us up even if they spot us. There's not enough room to land a fly.' There was a pause. Jock turned over on his side to ease the pain in his back. His hands were shaking with fatigue and nerves. Devereux undid his emergency kit. 'Two "K" rations, a bar of chocolate, and my old pipe,' he announced. 'How are we off for water?'

'My bottle's half-empty,' Jock answered.

'You keep it. Sen and I will share. Mine's full. S'pose there are some of those purifying tablets somewhere?'

'Spect they're fried in the kite.' Jock's eyes were searching the jungle, like a child awake in the night. 'I keep thinking I hear Japs,' he repeated.

SEN was watching the jungle crows circling up to meet the sun, draining the last



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rays, like vampires. It was nearly dark now. Only the treetops sprung through the mist, bottles in a calm sea. It was still very hot. Perspiration ran in rivulets across Devereux's stomach. It welled up into his hair, making the prickly heat sting so that he wished he could shave all the hair off. The only comfortable place was the impossible—strung up above ground, so that the air could flow round you. Wherever you touched, you stung.

Suddenly from the distance came the sound of drums. Devereux cried: 'They've found the kite!'

Jock passed his hand across his lips. 'God!' he exclaimed.

'I don't expect it's Japs. They'd never let 'em beat drums.' Then, as suddenly as it came, the beating stopped. Devereux held his breath.

'Better get moving,' advised Jock. Sen was watching his face, waiting to follow in whatever he did.

'No,' said Devereux. 'We'll stop here. It's just as difficult for them to find us here as if we moved around. At least we have a bearing for the morning. If they don't come we can get off to an early start and maybe reach the river by dusk.'

'I think we ought to get away,' Jock persisted.

'Shut up.'

Complete silence and darkness had now fallen over the jungle. It was so quiet that it seemed to ring little bells in your ears. Devereux's eyes became accustomed to the shape of the courtyard of the pagoda. Its once smooth floor was crumpled. Small white flowers, not unlike primroses in shape, were peeping out from between the cracks. In the centre lay the crumbling figure of a reclining Buddha. His head lay like a huge ball in the corner. His eyes had been gouged, and the rubies and sapphires stripped from his fingers.

In an instant the silence was snapped. It was as if they had been sitting in a pool whose surface had been broken by the suddenness of a fish leaping. Jock was up, his eyes searching. Devereux pulled him down. The sound came again. Devereux looked across at Sen, puzzled. Sen was grinning. He put out his hands and made little, hopping motions. Frogs!

Devereux broke into a 'K' ration and handed out some dry biscuits. The insects

were out now. Frogs were croaking all round. In the pipul trees near by, Devereux could hear crickets, and nearer, round his head and arms, the insistent buzz of the mosquito, as grating as the drill of a dentist. It had become much cooler. The leaves were moving at the touches of a breeze. Every now and then they could catch the shouts and singing of the tribesmen. Devereux was wondering if they were getting closer. They still appeared to be at a distance, but you could not tell through the thick jungle. The darkness was oppressive. You couldn't say how far away the nearest tree was. At times it seemed you could touch it, and then it seemed yards away.

Sen's head was pillowed on the flesh of his arm. Jock was still, but Devereux knew that he was not asleep. He wished he could light a cigarette. Then he noticed that the air round the eaves of the temple was peopled with glow-worms. They looked like hundreds of hermits' tapers. In past days the place would have glowed with little prayer-lamps such as these. He took out his cigarettes, knowing that he must not light one. In the packet was a ticket to a cinema. That morning, in Calcutta, he had booked a seat for the evening show. It was strange to see the ticket, here, in the middle of the jungle. It made him feel rather insignificant in a way. His cares seemed like clouds continually gathering and bursting, while he was laughing. All at once he felt very alone. He had nobody he could ask. He kept trying to tell himself that whatever happened it would not be the first time. It certainly wouldn't be the worst. There was always someone else.

Through the trees, wherever he looked, there seemed to be someone watching. He knew that it was only his nerves. His mind jogged along like a cart on an uneven track, trying to fathom the strangeness of his position. Five years ago in an Oxfordshire parsonage, with the tiny church tucked under the elms at its elbow, he had been sure of what was going to happen to him. He was as sure as he was of the view of the tangled garden with the ha-ha fence at the bottom which stretched soberly away to the slow river. He had been so wrapped in the life that even the minutest recollection—the sound of the glass-panelled front-door opening on to the cool hall flags—brought the whole of it back. It was a security that Jock



had never felt, and something that Sen felt even more forcibly than Devereux himself, through Jock.

DEVEREUX must have fallen into a deep sleep, for the next thing he remembered was seeing the sun yellowing the hilltop. He sat up on his elbow. Jock was out like a light beside him, his heavy breath blowing away the dust on the marble. Sen was gone.

Devereux's first thought was that he had left them. He cursed under his breath for going to sleep. He stood up and kicked Jock into life. Every leaf seemed to have eyes behind it, watching. 'The little fool's gone, Jock.'

Jock said nothing. Over the other side of the temple came the sound of splashing water. On their knees they passed the end of the ruined Buddha and peered over the wall. On the other side was a square pool covered in lotus. It was grey with slime. In one end sat Sen, splashing his back and arms like a schoolboy at the sea. He was talking excitedly to himself. Beside him lay the skin of a giant iguana lizard, and its flesh, green in the sun, lay in strips by it.

'Come here, you little —,' Jock called, 'come here.' The boy looked up, and as soon as he saw the carrot-like head over the wall he bounded out of the pool, grinning. He brought the remains of the iguana with him. Jock kicked him playfully on the backside. 'Why you go in the *pani*?'

Sen took no notice. His clothes clung to his slim body like the flesh itself. 'Good *khana*, mister Jock,' he enthused. '*Bahut achchha*. I make for you.' He held up the iguana for inspection.

While Sen was doing this, Devereux saw him suddenly stiffen like a retriever. For a moment he did not know what had happened. Then he noticed. Coming out of the ring of trees was a group of twenty or thirty small men. He heard Sen whisper: 'Nagas. Bad men.' As soon as they were in the clearing, Devereux salaamed. The way they were received would make all the difference. 'Can you speak to 'em, Sen?' Devereux inquired. They were only a few feet away now. Devereux took out his cigarettes. Jock grabbed the packet and threw it on the ground. There was a scramble. 'Quick,' he shouted, 'run!'

Devereux held his arm. 'Don't be a fool. They'd get us before we reached the trees.'

He turned to Sen, and said: 'Ask the head-man where we are.'

At first the man did not seem to understand. Then Sen tried another language. 'He says we are at Mongyn. He says are we Americans? He wants money.' Devereux took out a few rupees and some annas and held them out in his palm. The man didn't touch the note, but took the silver.

'We are to come back to the village, and he will give us food and shelter,' Sen translated.

'Ask him if there are any Japs around.'

'He says there are none. They were here last week, but they have gone to the Irrawaddy. They took some women and some men as carriers. Very angry. No like.'

Devereux nodded in agreement. The head-man was tying the money in a knot in his dhoti. His face was impassive. Devereux wished he knew what he was thinking. He felt that he was not satisfied by the money.

Half the group started off through the jungle. Sen followed with Jock. Devereux waited, and then saw that the other half of the group were following him. In less than ten minutes they were passing the water-tanks and bamboo bashes of a village. The smell was almost overpowering. It was the same in the back streets of any Indian city or village. It was something indefinable, but like burnt rubber.

ON arriving at the village, Devereux, Jock, and Sen were put in a basha and sat on the bamboo floor. The walls were papered with old advertisements for English goods and copies of newspapers. A man brought them some coconuts and bananas on a leaf. Then he stationed himself outside the door. They ate the bananas, but the coconuts were too hard to crack. When they had finished, they took out the map and Jock worked out the best route to the river. The village was marked, though it had no name. It seemed they were nine miles away. On the other side of the Irrawaddy were British troops. Jock calculated that if they started out soon they might be able to make it by nightfall. After that they lay back and smoked the last of Jock's cigarettes.

Devereux wondered what the man on the door was doing. He looked across and saw Sen's face. It was pale, and frightened. It appeared that he wanted to say something,

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but that he was afraid. Suddenly Sen said: 'I think they go fetch the Japs, sahib.' He glanced up at Jock, ashamed, as if he would scold him for leading them into this position.

Devereux looked out through a slit in the bamboo. The headman was coming across the compound some hundred yards away. He was talking excitedly, and pointing at the basha. Beside him was a Japanese officer and four men. It seemed an age before Devereux could think of doing anything. He poised himself and said as calmly as he could: 'Japs!'

The expression on Jock's face never flickered. He picked up a coconut and raised it. It hit the guard on the back of the head like hitting an egg. Devereux tumbled him forward and waited outside the door. Jock was searching for something inside. He decided to run for it. He had made the jungle, and he turned to see Sen waiting beside the hut for Jock. The Japs were about thirty yards away now. In an instant Jock burst through the opening. Devereux counted the steps as they ran. Sen was taking twice as many as Jock, and appeared oblivious of what was really happening. They had covered half the distance before the Japs saw them. Devereux heard a shout: '*Ike! Haya! Haya!*'

There was a burst of fire, and Devereux shut his eyes. As he opened them, Jock and Sen were in the jungle beside him, and running full tilt. He turned to join them as a rattle of fire came from behind.

Devereux could picture the Japs spreading out among the trees. He knew that if the three of them kept running they still had a chance. The Japs were probably no better in the jungle than they were themselves, and by the time their pursuers had collected a few Nagas they might be a mile away. The going was easier than the way they had come from the aircraft, though it was slightly uphill. By this time Devereux had caught up with the other two. Jock was panting hard and cursing. He had not been able to find his water-bottle.

Now and again from behind they could hear the shouts of the men trying to keep in touch with each other. Sometimes the cries sounded very near. The echoes came off the trees like hitting indiarubber. The heavy foliage overhead gave the trees a dull, leaden glint, but here and there the strong sun penetrated, and piercing shafts of light struck

through on to the green leaves. It was in one of these shafts that Jock first noticed Sen's leg. It was bleeding profusely from the thigh. His face was drawn and his usually full lips were tight. Devereux caught his arm. 'All right?'

'Hokay. Hokay, sahib.'

The shouting behind them had died to an occasional burst by this time, and Devereux called a halt so that he could see Sen's leg. Jock threw himself on the ground and lay unable to speak. Devereux looked at the wound. One of the shots had grazed the skin. It was not serious, but Sen was losing blood rapidly. 'Can you run all right?' Devereux asked.

'Sure, sahib. Sure.'

Devereux knew from the emphasis that the wound was causing Sen trouble. He tied his khaki belt round it in the hope that it would keep on. As he worked, the perspiration welled up on his forehead and ran into his eyes. It had been all right when he had been running, but as soon as he stopped he felt his body cover in a slime of sweat.

Then came two sounds which brought them to their feet. One was a shout very near, and a hacking, slashing at the undergrowth. The other was the faintest whisper of a breeze. They jogged on through the thick creepers and twisted shrubs. They could hear their pursuers quite plainly behind them now. Devereux had learned that the Japs were afraid of getting lost in the jungle alone. They always shouted to each other. The breeze grew to a wind. This was their one hope. Soon the air was alive with insects seeking the undersides of the leaves. It meant rain. The wonderful coolness round their bodies seemed to blow energy into their limbs. As the air darkened, the whole jungle became vivid bottle-green, and the first drop fell like a dart on Devereux's shoulder. The light and shade had gone. There were no different tints, only stark colours, which made Devereux bilious as he looked at them.

They reached a slight clearing where someone had once made a fire. In the stillness it came. In a matter of seconds the rain was pouring down in a sheet. They stood with arms outstretched, welcoming it. The shouting had died behind them. Once again the Japs seemed to have lost the trail. In any case, Devereux decided that it was impossible to run all the way to the river. Here was as good a place to stop as any. If the enemy

came—then there wasn't much to be done about it, anyway.

DEVEREUX was watching Sen's face, trying to capture something of the oriental resignation in it, when he saw him look up at Jock, twist, and collapse. He lay, his face in the ground, in nearly an inch of water. Quickly Jock bent down and turned him over, resting his head on his arm. They propped him up against a tree. His soft walnut skin had turned yellow.

Whilst Devereux tied a handkerchief round Sen's leg as a fresh bandage, Jock stood silently watching. He was stirring the mud with one foot. Suddenly he bent forward and dropped his 'K' ration lightly into Sen's lap. 'C'mon,' he said. 'Let's get crackin'.' It was a moment before Devereux realised what Jock said. Even when it struck him like a knife-edge, he could not utter a word. He was trying to think that Jock was just unbalanced with fatigue. His body was at its lowest, the sap drained from it as if it were rotten wood.

At last Devereux rose. 'You go by yourself,' he said, tossing the 'K' ration back at Jock in the mud. He looked across and saw Jock's blue eyes watching it, half-floating, a wet, messy packet. It seemed Jock dared not lift his eyes from it. They were too heavy with his curdled mind. Then Jock kicked the packet, and it split. His face relaxed as if he had split his own head. For a little they listened to the rain. They were being drowned and rotted in it like grains of wheat.

Jock bent and lifted the boy on to his shoulder, without saying anything. As he did so, Devereux saw that he was beginning to revive. After a bit Devereux offered to take a turn at carrying Sen. But Jock never answered. Somehow it made him feel better to see Jock with his disciple on his shoulders, despite the boy's protests.

They never remembered how much longer they walked. It may have been only about two miles. Soon they were climbing again. The rain had stopped, and the sun had dried their clothes. Sen was still dazed.

As soon as they felt the ground give way under their feet Jock let Sen slide to the ground. He held his head in his arm and chucked him under the chin. Sen smiled, and took a drink from Devereux's bottle. 'I no-good man, sahib.'

His leg had stopped bleeding. The blood

was clotted black against his skin. Devereux took out the map and held it against Jock's back. The waterproof sheets had kept their colour, but he could not make out where they were. They couldn't be far from the river. Jock stepped forward and glanced through the trees. Some fifty feet below, cutting a winding path through the jungle, was the great Irrawaddy. He whistled to the others, and they crawled on their stomachs to the edge. Sen moved surprisingly quickly when he heard the news. On the other bank was jungle—the same as on this side—but it was home. Down on their left, sheltered from the other bank, they could see Japs darting about as they manned some guns. Several barges were tied up below, obviously ready for a crossing. 'We'll have to swim it,' Devereux said, his eyes on the swirling current below.

'What, now!' Jock cried.

'To-night, you fool. With your hair they'd never miss.' Jock scratched his head as if in anticipation. 'Wonder what time it is now?' Both their watches had stopped. Jock thought that it might be four o'clock by the sun. There was nothing to do but sit and wait.

Devereux made sure that they were not near any camp, and that the Japs down the bank could not see them. Then he settled himself in the undergrowth. He relaxed. In the corner of his mind he could hear Jock telling Sen some story of his wealth and position at home. He was fond of telling the boy tales. Sen's face was almost beautiful in its softness. He was taking in every word and storing it in his memory like a jewel. His deep, brown eyes flickered only when they could not understand. Occasionally a smile flashed across his young face and he patted the side of his leg in delight. Beside Jock he felt a man. Devereux wondered how old he really was. You could never tell with an Indian. Certainly not more than eighteen or nineteen.

AS soon as the sun disappeared, the three climbed quietly down the hillside, and twenty yards from the edge they stopped in a cluster of bushes. Further down the bank they could hear the murmur of Jap voices. Devereux had burnt the cork from his water-bottle, and he blacked their faces with it. Although there wasn't a breeze, they were shivering from the excitement.

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Devereux broke a match in three and they drew for who should go first. He knew that the first one in the water would probably draw most of the fire. He would also have to warn the British side of the river of their identity. They had agreed that as soon as they heard the shout the second would take to the water. It was better not to go in a bunch. He saw Jock's eyes watching Sen. Suddenly Jock undid his watch and said: 'You have that, boy. I'm not so good in the water.' He laughed. Then he added: 'I want it back when we get over, though!' And before the others had made sure what they had got, he turned and ran into the water. He hadn't even bothered to see what part of the matchstick he had drawn.

They could hear the boots which he had tied round his neck banging together as he swam. They could not see, so they counted. One, two, three . . . fifteen . . . thirty . . . sixty. He was too far away to hear now. Devereux motioned to Sen to get into the water ready. Then they heard a shout, from a long way down stream. It was Jock: 'Don't fire! British! Don't fire!' Instantly the river was flooded with light. From their left—it seemed almost beside them—sprang the powerful beam of a searchlight. A burst of fire came from the other side. The fire spattered into the earth around them. The light went out. Devereux waited a second and

then pushed Sen off. As he did so, he noticed him put the watch into his mouth. A minute later he followed himself. By the time Sen was halfway across and a good way down the river Devereux had caught up with him.

The next thing Devereux could remember was seeing the cherubic face of a Gurkha dragging him from the water. He heard him talk to Sen in his own language. Somewhere in the last few yards his strength must have ebbed with the river. The Gurkhas were not saying much. They were, naturally, suspicious. Devereux sent one to fetch an officer.

It was then that he saw Sen. He was holding something in his arms. Jock's boots. He kept turning them over in his hands and his eyes seemed transfixed on the wet, muddy leather. There was nothing in his face to show what he was feeling. His short hair, wet from the river, stuck in a tuft at the back. His lips moved, but not in words. All at once he turned to Devereux. 'Good boots, sahib. Good man.'

The Gurkhas came back with a stretcher for Sen. He was still looking out at the river. The moon was up and hung like a huge ball, naked, in the night. Its light tipped the ripples on the water. For all Devereux knew, Jock probably lived on for Sen in each one of those laughing ripples of moonlight.

Sen left the boots and the watch in a neat reverential pile on the bank.

July First Story: The first instalment of *Desert Bond*, a tale of the Western Desert, by Robin Maugham.

### The Ineffable

*What shall I say? That you possess my mind  
So I forget all other things at hand?  
Or being all alone I strangely find  
You at my side, all time and distance spanned?  
Should I extol the merit of your smile,  
Or marvel that dark eyes so richly gleam?  
Declare my soul bewitched with artful guile,  
And swear your laughter haunts a summer stream?  
Shall outworn saw appraise perfection's worth?  
Or facile tongue with constancy be wed?  
Then love's expression languishes in dearth  
Since new invention fails, and all was said  
Unless for stricken wit the heart replies  
With shining truth fast mirrored in these eyes.*

ARTHUR TURCK.

# The Last of the Lone Shieling

MALCOLM K. MACMILLAN, M.P.

I GIVE thanks that, even in these days of tourist-drives and dollar-drawing, nobody has, as yet, tried to commercialise or Butlinate the 'lone shieling of the misty island.' In only one part of the Highlands, the Outer Hebridean island of Lewis, has the shieling any reality to-day. In a few districts of northern Scandinavia the ancient custom still continues; and it may well be that it was introduced into the Hebrides during the centuries of Norse occupation of the Western Isles. But the custom is passing so swiftly away that, even in the Outer Hebrides, only a few crofting villages in Lewis now practise it at all. Soon it will be remembered only in song and story.

'Going to the shieling' means, briefly, setting off with the cattle from the crofting townships, while the village pastures are rested and the crops grow towards harvest, and living temporarily, far from the villages, in turf and stone bothies on the open moorland from early June till August. The practice had many advantages for humans as well as for the cattle. The animals would return to the villages in late summer glossy, sleek, and fat, while their owners came home refreshed and healthy from a long open-air holiday.

I can recall the scenes when whole village populations, except the bedridden, would start out with a few simple furnishings for the *airidh*, as the temporary bothies were called. Their goods were loaded on to horse-carts, but some of the stronger young people carried quite a lot on their backs. There would be an occasional gig, or trap, but most walked barefooted, driving the cattle for mile after mile to the moors. The village pastures were regarded as closed, the sheep having been herded away to the moorland long before; and each village had, and has, its own pretty well defined area of moor grazings. There is a code of shieling law and usage which few transgress.

It has always been mainly the women who

spent the full summer at the shieling. The men, once they had assisted in getting the cattle and hens and general luggage to the moors, and had reroofed the standing walls of the *airidh*, mostly left for the fishing, often following the fish right round the northern Scottish coasts.

AROUND the shieling there grew up a host of pleasant, romantic, and sentimental associations and whole cycles of *sceallachd*, or minstrelsy, romantic lyrics and ballads. 'Seldom was there an idle day, but many a happy, idle hour and many a night of song and laughter' was how I have often heard one old friend describe the shieling time of her girlhood, over sixty years ago.

There were cows to look after, to milk morning and evening and to keep from wandering too far away, among aggressive stranger cattle, or into the bogs. There was milk to set for cream, cream to gather up carefully in the shells of great clams, cheese to make, and curds and whey to prepare. There were oatcakes to bake—of old, over a fire of dried heather, with its bright, smokeless flame—and scones to make—well, 'bannocks' is the word—over the peat-fire. Barley bread was popular, too, and barley porridge, for those who preferred it, cooked in the three-legged, black pot hung from the black chain from the rafter over the fire.

Furnishing was simple enough. In the old days a turf roof was the usual covering. In more recent times a tarpaulin is slung over the simple rafters and weighted down on each side of the building by heavy stones hung on ropes. Each side of the true *airidh* has a door: one is opened, the other closed, according to the way the wind blows. On still days both doors remain open. At the *airidh's* end a sort of lean-to byre is built for the cattle and,



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near by, a small kennel-like bothy for the hens.

Within the airidh, beds were the main furniture, simply made of dried bracken, heather, and a covering of hay. Shelves were easily built-in in the turf walls, and cupboards presented no more difficulty. It was all on a strictly temporary and camping basis, and nobody expected luxuries. Anyway, the work, the cooking, and the eating were done, and the time spent, the fires lit, out of doors all through those long days of tranquil summer living. A few pots and pans there would be, basins of stone or enamel-ware for the milk, stone crocks for cream and butter, and perhaps a small wooden kist for the meal (and flour, in recent days), and other essentials.

Such were the main furnishings. No need for curtains or wall-paperings, or any carpet other than a spread of clean, dry heather on the stamped clay floor. Some salted fish and cured herring, with potatoes, made up, along with plentiful milk and its many products and some eggs, a wholesome enough diet for the shieling folk.

Bathing and the washing of clothes and the few simple utensils was all done at the nearest burn, or in the soft, brown peaty waters of moorland loch or pool. For fuel, a few bags of peat were brought from the village peat-stacks, and many used to cut sufficient at the moor before leaving for home at each summer's end to serve their needs at next year's shieling. Light was at one time supplied by an open cruise, a small open oil-vessel, with a spout and string wick. Later came paraffin-lamps, smoky enough, but pure compared with the old method. Still, lighting mattered little. There was no darkness through those long, summer moorland nights out in the Atlantic.

**S**HIELING time was, all things considered, a placid, leisurely flow of untroubled happy nights and days. I know of no Islesman or Isleswoman who speaks with anything but warm, nostalgic affection of island shieling days. Some of the oldest and loveliest Hebridean songs are about the shieling, the people, the customs, and, above all, the maidens:

*Last night by the shieling  
Was Mairi my beloved. . . .  
Like the white lily floating  
On the peathag's black water  
Is the brow of my beloved  
In the darkness of her tresses. . . .*

'Colin's Cattle' is the subject—handsomely and poetically treated, too—of another ancient shieling song, with a sweet and haunting air. Songs of love, of lamentation, of work and play; songs for the churning of the cream to butter; herding songs—all have their place, along with songs of the fairies and songs of

*Old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago.*

It was customary to sing the shieling songs while milking the moorland-fattened cattle. It soothed the cows: it soothed the milkmaid, who could also plead the strictest practical reasons for her lightheartedness among her more staid elders. And the lovers liked to sing the songs as they wandered, free from the restrictive watchfulness of the villages, across the moorland's coloured zones, which reflected at once the sky and the sea. In autumn, an island sunset is a wonder of russets, golds, and purples, with lemon and silver threading through the deepening opaque, with fiery crimson and deeper blues.

Later in the evening falls a still profounder peace. The green, green hills are greyed in the twilight. Mist's on the sea and a light haze on the moorland. Over the bothies the peat-smoke rises slowly on the air and fades into the soft shadows. The glory of the Atlantic sunset has burned to dull ashen blues and deeper purple and pale gold over the endless rhythms of the westward-marching waters.

Spot after spot in the Isles is named after the shielings and the airidhs—the airidh where Red Allan or Big Angus (*Aonghais Mor*) lived or performed some wonderful thing, the airidh of the monster, the airidh of the white cows, of the crooked fisherman.

Never can anyone who has lived those island shieling nights forget the sweet, especial enchantment of that golden place and happy, childlike time. Never shall I forget that evening of fragile, rare tranquillity, as I stood at the end of our airidh at dusk, while from a neighbouring airidh there drifted on the evening air the Gaelic lilt of the twenty-third psalm:

*He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green: He leadeth me  
the quiet waters by.*

They were at the 'taking of the Books,' which Burns has immortalised in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. The fine old island fisherman who led the singing of the psalm at the shieling on that unforgotten evening has been



led away to those quiet waters only these few days past in his eighty-ninth year.

Quiet waters, and pastures green. Brown moorland lochs and secret tawny tarns: dear russet-purple moors and sunsets of ineffable beauty. It would sadden the heart of the returning emigrant to see the ill-assorted colonies of modern hutments that townee visitors to the island moors have erected in place of the old-styled airidhs. It is a cause of much resentment among the crofters who still go to the shieling and who value the simple

peace and privacy of the old days and ways. For there are still those of us who are old-fashioned enough, or foolish, or primitive, enough, or merely unashamedly sentimental enough, to prefer to rough it under tarpaulin in the turf-and-stone airidh of the shieling, and to dream, among the raucous interruptions of cars and village buses, passing on the near-by highway, of that old carefree time, amid

*Hills of sheep, and the homes of the silent  
vanished races,  
And winds, austere and pure.*

## Monsoon

T. R. R. DOIG

AT the very least the monsoon spells relief from oppressive heat: at the most, the difference between food and starvation, between life and death. To those living in countries lying on the equator its presence passes almost unnoticed, for in these latitudes it is almost perpetual. It is here that the monsoon has its origin and greatest duration. As it travels northward, so its intensity diminishes until finally it spends itself entirely in a few isolated showers in the foothills of the Himalayas. Or it may not even reach so far.

So it is, too, that, as the monsoon travels north, its importance increases. The arid lands of central India are populated by courtesy of the monsoon, for, should it fail, the crops will fail also, and certain famine follow. To the people of that region the monsoon is not merely an interesting phenomenon of nature. It is the life-giver, as important as the sun, and as venerated. Its approach is observed with all the reverence accorded a religious festival.

The monsoon passes over the land like a magic brush. Where only brown earth existed, there appears a carpet of green. Foliage now clothes the trees. The myna

bird stops his breathless croakings. And cattle, for a spell at least, cease to be tormented by the fine dust raised by their hoofs as they plod patiently along.

Nothing, it seems, remains unaffected by the monsoon. The dry, baked earth, which has lain quiescent in the quivering heat, heaves suddenly. An alligator, roused from his long torpor, sensing that the rains have arrived, bursts from his prison of caked mud, and heads for the river. Mayflies, instinct with life for a day only, make their appearance. Snakes, too, awakened from their lengthy sojourn in the earth, and lazily insinuate themselves into the concourse of teeming life which has made itself manifest at the touch of the monsoon.

The people, also, pass on their several ways with glad hearts. For them, the rain means the surety of survival. The grain, instead of withering and dying in the fierce heat, will now thrive and ripen to maturity. The grass will grow, providing fodder for the cattle and ensuring a precious supply of milk for man.

Not only is the monsoon the revivifier: it is also the provider against the future. Rivers are again in full spate. The wells are re-

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plenished, and reservoirs refilled, sufficient to enable life to continue until once more the monsoon arrives in due season to repeat its bounty.

It is true that in many parts the monsoon is not an altogether unmixed blessing. Much flooding takes place, making transport very difficult. Nevertheless, even this may be overcome, where necessary, by the use of elephant. The inundation, however, is of short duration. The thick glutinous mud gradually assumes a sort of doughy consistency, and eventually settles down to soft springy earth, very pleasant to walk upon. The scarfing dryness has gone from the atmosphere.

**A**ND what of the phenomenon itself, this mighty upheaval of nature, so rich in its effects in so many ways, yet never far removed from the threat of utter destruction at the height of its fury?

The monsoon happens very suddenly. For days the clouds have been piling up, the atmosphere dead-still, with a brooding calm which seems to contain a vague and nameless threat as the leaden air becomes steadily more oppressive. The day has passed into evening, and now, in the quiet of the night, a faint murmur, dying almost before it has commenced, breaks the silence. Another murmur, more pronounced than the first. Then, without warning, with a noise like a jet-turbine, the wind rises to a thin scream. Darkness is turned into day as lightning flashes, and, to the accompaniment of earth-shaking claps of thunder, the heavens open.

The transformation from heavy silence to turbulent uproar is frightening and bewildering. The eerie light of continuous electrical discharges reveals tall palm-trees, tortured and bent by the relentless force of the gale. The sea, whipped to a yeasty foam, hurls itself madly against the stubborn rocks. Torrential rain, lashed by the shrieking wind, endeavours to beat down everything having the temerity to keep standing.

The storm waxes fiercer, until the very foundations of the earth appear to tremble, and it becomes a source of wonderment that the elements do not tear apart bodily the dwellings about which they rage. Villagers and fishermen huddle in their frail huts, apprehensive lest each succeeding gust should either lift and batter them against the surrounding palms, or bring one of the trees

hurtling down upon them. One, two, three hours the pandemonium continues, while a perceptible chill invades the atmosphere. In spite of locked doors and barred shutters, flurries of rain find their way inside. Nothing seems secure against this raging monster.

**A**S suddenly as it commenced, the cataclysm ceases. The noise dies away. In the silence which follows, the steady running of water can be heard as the torrents which have poured into the monsoon drains are carried away to the sea. Again the silence is punctuated by sharp cracklings as half-uprooted trees come crashing down.

But, now, where a few hours before the atmosphere was burdened and stagnant, a delicious feeling of freshness steals across the senses. A delightful coolness prevails. When day breaks, the trees and vegetation appear looking fresher than they have for weeks past. Of the overnight storm little remains, apparently. An uprooted palm-tree here and there, perhaps, but otherwise the only evidence is the sea, which continues to boil, though with lessened force.

As you pass along the beach, however, further evidences of the maelstrom present themselves. Looking upward, you may see a catamaran, one of the quaint outrigger canoes used by the fishermen, securely lodged in the grip of two adjacent palm-trees. Natives are busy repairing the roofs of their huts with palm-thatch where the fury of the gale has ripped it off. Others are active in clearing away the rubbish which has been heaped up by the wind. The beach itself testifies to the violence of the upheaval. Everywhere can be seen driftwood, brush, coconut shells, and that miscellany of jetsam thrown up by any great storm.

This, then, is the breaking of the monsoon, more devastating in some places than in others, but always leaving behind a sense of calm benevolence, a smile after the awful frownings of nature in her most turbulent mood. Renewed vigour is apparent in every aspect of animal, insect, and vegetable life.

Although I have seen the beginning of the monsoon many times since, I shall never again experience the same mixture of thrill, fear, and fascination which gripped me that night when, for the first time, I witnessed this awesome happening of nature in Colombo, the capital of Ceylon.

# The Magic Putter

MEX TUTHILL

(Author of *Golf Without Golf*)

BASIL BLATHER-WICK loved junk-shops, and when he saw one he gazed at the mixed bag of curios in the window with the same zest with which a woman looks at the hats in a milliner's. When he noticed the shop in Station Street, he stopped and examined the contents, if not with the eye of an expert, yet with the eye of one who loves the flotsam and jetsam of the auction-room. He looked with interest at a cut-glass decanter and a copper warming-pan; viewed disparagingly some of the other articles displayed for sale—boots, gramophone-records, old books, clocks, and cheap jewellery. Then he noticed the old brass putter standing in a corner of the window. It was a very old putter, with a thick hickory shaft and a heavy blade. He stood and stared at it, wondering how it had got there and what golfer in the years gone by had used it, and loved or hated it. He suddenly determined to buy the putter, so he went into the shop and asked the price of the copper warming-pan, for he knew that no one ever goes into an antique-shop or a junk-store and discloses right away the reason for his visit.

The fat, middle-aged woman behind the counter sized him up with a knowing eye and said: 'Five pounds, and cheap at the price.'

'Five pounds?' Basil repeated. 'Isn't that a lot?'

'Warming-pans is scarce, dearie. Five quid is the price.'

Basil shook his head. 'Too dear.'

'They'll be dearer yet. Look at the price of copper. Anything else you fancy?'

'There's an old stick with a brass end in the window.'

'The golf-club?'

'Is it a golf-club?'

'It's one of the best golf-clubs I've ever handled. Thirty bob, and worth every shilling of it.'

'Thirty shillings! Why, a new putter with a steel shaft only costs two pounds five, and that old museum-piece must be fifty years old.'

'Course it's old. Genuine antique, it is. Thirty shillings is dirt cheap. Look at the price of brass. The brass end alone is worth the money.'

'I don't want it to play with.'

'What you want it for doesn't affect the price.'

'Oh, well,' Basil said, moving to the door, 'it doesn't matter.'

'But, seeing you're a golfer, I'm willing to meet you.'

'D'you mean you play golf?' Basil exclaimed in astonishment, surveying the corpulent figure of the shopkeeper.

'I've no time to spare for playing a daft—I mean, I don't play.'

'But you said you'd meet me?'

'Meet you as regards the price. Twenty-five bob and it's yours.'

'It's only worth ten.'

'It's worth twenty-five, but, seeing you've made up your mind to have it, you being a good golfer, I'll split the difference. Seventeen and a tanner. Take it or leave it.'

'I'll take it,' Basil said. 'It'll always do to beat carpets with.'

'Beat carpets! You'll beat everyone with a club like that.'

Basil left the shop with the putter in his hand, and, meeting young Jones, instantly wished he'd asked the woman to wrap it up.

'And what have we got here?' young Jones inquired. 'Petrarch's putter?'

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'I don't know whose it was. I've just bought it.'

'Why?'

'Just fancied it. Got a bit of weight.'

Jones took the putter in his hand. 'Weight is right! But speaking with some knowledge of the law, old boy, don't let the police see you carrying it about.'

'Why not?'

'They'd naturally take you for a potential murderer, with a blunt instrument like that in your hand.'

BASIL took the putter home and decided that the brass could do with a spot of cleaning. He got a duster and began to rub. On the third rub, he felt a draught of hot air, and the next moment a big man in plus-fours and a red pullover was standing in front of him. 'In the old days,' the stranger remarked, 'I should have said "O Master, thy slave will obey thy commands," but things are different now. When Aladdin was alive, of course, they talked like that, but—'

'Where did you spring from?' Basil inquired in astonishment.

'I am what was known in the bad old days as a slave of the lamp, a genie. We're described as Aladdin's Lamp Board Officials now.'

Basil gaped. 'I don't understand.'

'The brass blade of that putter was made from a piece of the metal from Aladdin's lamp. As a former golf pro I've been detailed to wait upon its owner—after the usual three rubs, of course—ascertain his wishes, and carry them out.'

'D'you mean I can have anything I wish?'

'Not quite. In accordance with the revised Rules and Regulations of the Board your wishes can only be granted if they concern golf, and then only as regards putting.'

'Can I have a golf-course of my own?'

'Sorry. Nothing doing.'

'What about a bit of ready cash, say fifty thousand, for a global golf tour?'

'Definitely not. Surely you realise that the present financial stringency, which is common not only in Britain but—'

'Then dollars? I could do with a few thousand dollars.'

'No cash! You can only be granted wishes that concern putting. For instance, if you want to hole a twenty-yard putt, you just rub the putter, wish, and I pop the pill in the can.'

Basil looked at his companion in amazement. 'You mean, I can hole any length of putt in one stroke?'

'Certainly you can. Even off the green, if you whack the ball with this putter and wish it to hole out, I'll see it does.'

'But won't the other player see you? For example, if I'm playing with young Jones, won't he spot you dropping my ball in the tin?'

'No one can see or hear me but you. All you do is to rub the putter three times and wish the ball to hole out. I'll appear and kick the pill into the can. It's perfectly simple in practice; you hit the ball towards the flag, I chase after it and dribble it into the hole. Actually, I was a professional footballer as well as a professional golfer. Any more questions? No. Then I'll fade.'

The man in plus-fours disappeared into thin air and Basil laid the putter reverently on the table. He poured out a stiff whisky and soda, lit a cigarette, and considered the matter. He could win any cup he cared to enter for with the aid of the magic putter, and, if he became the acknowledged champion of the Club, it was possible that Etta Merton might take some notice of him, even though it was common news in the men's lounge that the announcement of her engagement to Phil Topham might be expected at an early date.

WHEN Basil had first seen Etta Merton he had fallen in love with her as quickly and as easily as a caddie-car runs downhill. Her small, slim, eager figure, her ready smile and dancing eyes, were enough to attract anyone as susceptible as Basil, but it was her wonderful red hair that made him desire her as much as the needy golfer desires a set of matched irons.

A week after he had bought the putter they were introduced at the Annual Dance of the Werton Golf Club, and he danced with her under the sternly watchful eye of Phil Topham, but he realised almost at once that his chances of winning her were as slender as her slim waist.

'Phil's been telling me about your winning a pot, Mr Blather-Wick,' she said with a smile. 'You're quite a golfer, I hear.'

Basil flushed. He guessed what Phil had said—Basil won the Timpkins Tankard because there were only four in for it and the

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other three tore their cards up.' 'I'm not good,' he told her, 'but I'm good enough to beat Phil Topham on handicap terms.'

Etta laughed. 'A challenge, eh? Shall I tell Phil?'

'Please. Say I'll play him any time, and beat him.'

'Phil's awfully good. Right on his game just now.'

'Well, my putting's not bad. Lots of games are won on the greens, you know.'

Etta laughed again. 'I do hope Phil and you play, for I might have a side bet on the match.'

'On Phil winning?'

'Of course, on Phil.'

Basil gazed in fascination at her hair. It had an intoxicating effect on him, and he suddenly exclaimed: 'Tell you what, I'll bet you a dozen new golf-balls to six dances at the Infirmary Ball that I can beat him on handicap terms.'

Etta stared at him in surprise. 'I don't quite get you.'

'It's simple enough. You tell Phil I'll play him. If he beats me, you get a dozen new four-bob pills. If I win, you give me six dances at the Infirmary Ball next month.'

'Phil would never let you win on those terms,' Etta exclaimed with heightened colour, 'and I can do with a dozen new balls. The bet is on!'

'I will enjoy those dances,' Basil murmured as the music ended.

But Basil didn't enjoy the talk he had with Phil Topham a little later, for Phil was in a furious temper. 'What the devil d'you mean, Blather-Wick, by your preposterous suggestion of playing me a match and betting Miss Merton golf-balls against dances that you'll beat me?'

Basil became angry too. 'What right had you to make fun of my game to her?'

Phil Topham glared at him. 'What did she say I said?'

'She said enough for me to know you'd told her I was the prize rabbit of the Club, and I resent it bitterly. I shouldn't dream of telling her you dance like a grizzly on a glacier in a gale!'

'Like a what?'

'You heard! If you're afraid of playing me, just say so.'

'I'll play, and I'll give you a beating you'll never forget. D'you think I'd let you get away with six dances with Etta? Not on

your life! I'll play you on Saturday, unless you care to apologise and admit it was a joke in very questionable taste?'

'Saturday at two sharp,' Basil said as he turned away. 'And I hope you can putt, for I'm putting like a demon.'

Of course, the news of the challenge soon spread, and young Jones questioned Basil when he found him drinking moodily at the bar. 'What's the trouble between Topham and you, Basil? I hear you've challenged him to a golf duel, and all for the love of a lady.'

'Well, Topham's been making a monkey of me about the way I won the Timpkins Tankard, so I said I'd play him.'

'An authoritative source says, if you win, Etta Merton has to dance six times with you at the Infirmary Ball?'

'She'll enjoy those dances better than the ones she's forced to have with Brumas's big brother.'

'But, my dear old Basil, Phil will simply eat you alive. He's playing almost down to scratch and, after all, you're a pretty mouldy twenty-four.'

'I may be fairly mediocre until I get on the green.'

'Then what?'

'You remember that old brass putter I bought at the junk-shop?'

'Petrarch's pet! I remember.'

'Cannot go wrong with it. Holing every putt long or short. I'm banking on that putter putting paid to Phil.'

'Nice alliteration, but I'm backing him to win.'

'I'll bet you an even quid he doesn't.'

Young Jones took out his notebook. 'Thanks, old boy, I can do with the cash.'

ON getting home from the dance in the early hours of the morning, Basil solemnly rubbed the brass blade of the putter three times, for he wanted to have an immediate conference with the man in plus-fours. To his dismay nothing happened. He tried another three rubs, but all that happened was that the brass gleamed brighter, and with sinking heart he began to think about the probable result of the match without the putter's magical aid. He would in all likelihood be beaten ten and eight. The Club members would laugh themselves sick; Topham would sneer; and Etta would toss her



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red head and look upon him in future as a mere rub of the green. The magic had departed from the putter, he decided, so he went to bed feeling like an old caddie who has just seen four of his regulars with new caddie-cars.

Next morning after breakfast he picked up the putter and rubbed it perfunctorily. Instantly the genie appeared, but it was evident that he wasn't in a particularly cheery mood. 'Look here,' he exclaimed, 'just cut out calling me up when I'm off duty. You wakened me up half-a-dozen times last night, you know.'

'Don't you have to appear every time I rub?'

'Certainly not! In the bad old days I should have, but under the Board's rules my hours are nine till five.'

'D'you mean to tell me if I rub you up before nine or after five you don't materialise?'

'That's so, and, what's more, we're agitating for a seven-hour day now—nine till four.'

'Gosh!'

'What are you goshing for? Isn't eight hours enough? How would you like to be at the beck and call of someone for eight solid hours? Anyway, what d'you want now I'm here?'

Basil explained what had happened at the dance, and the genie whistled. 'What does Topham play off?'

'Six, but Jones says he's playing down to scratch.'

'And what's your handicap?'

'Twenty-four.'

'Twenty-four! Holy heck! I've never been attached to a limit man before.'

Basil glared. 'Well, you are now. So what!'

'Like playing on a wet and windy day, I'll just have to make the best of it. Now your match is on Saturday, so we'd better put in a bit of practice. Let's go to the course right away.'

Basil drove to the course, rubbed the putter, and the man in plus-fours was beside him in a moment. 'Let's see your swing,' he commanded.

Basil swung, and his companion frowned. 'I've never seen so many faults in one swing before. Now, you're a left-hander, so why don't you keep a straight right arm? Why don't you pivot? Why don't you keep your head down? Why don't you—'

Basil was not in a very happy frame of mind and he was not prepared to stand wholesale criticism from one he could summon with a rub. 'Speak when you're spoken to, you spook,' he said angrily.

'You dare to call me a spook! I've never been so insulted in all my death. I wash my hands of you. Slice, pull, hook, or top as you like, I don't care. I should like to add that your swing reminds me of a short-sighted butterfly-collector swiping at a flying-saucer!'

Basil picked up his bag and moved with injured dignity off the tee. He walked down the fairway to the first green. Placing half-a-dozen balls at intervals on the edge of the green, he took out the pin, rubbed his putter three times, and muttered: 'Hole these.'

One after another he struck the balls, and the man in plus-fours panted after them and dribbled them into the hole. 'Give me a chance,' he expostulated. 'If you hit 'em as quick as that I may let one slip past the tin and have to kick it back, then what would your partner think?'

'Your job,' Basil announced coldly, 'is to hole my putts. We will now essay an approach shot.' He walked fifty yards up the fairway, dropped a ball, and struck it with the putter. 'Hole that!' he exclaimed.

The man in plus-fours dashed after the ball, kicked it towards the green, raced past it, stood at the back of the hole, and the ball bumped against his feet and dropped in.

At this wonderful exhibition of agility, Basil felt much better and was inclined to be magnanimous. 'Good show!' he remarked, as he walked to the green and picked the ball out of the tin.

His spirit companion seemed less disgruntled too. 'All I want is a fair deal. I'll do my best for you, but my wind isn't what it was, so be easy with the approach shots. Anyway, Topham may be suspicious if you take your putter every time you're that distance from the flag.'

'He won't see you, will he?'

'No.'

'Then what the eye doesn't see—'

'But—'

'Leave it to me. I'll only use the putter off the green in an emergency, but I must win the match, you understand?'

'You get your ball on or near the green and I'll do the rest.'

Basil suddenly laughed. 'Tell you what,



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if you can kick my ball into the tin, can't you kick Topham's off the green?' 'Sorry, I can't. Our rules are rigid. I can only touch your ball.'

'Pity! Still, I think we'll manage, with a bit of luck. I should be on or near the greens at the very longest holes in four at the most, and with my handicap allowance a five should be good enough for a half if we don't win the hole. I've a strong feeling, my ghostly friend, that Etta Merton will have six enjoyable dances at the Infirmary Ball.'

WHEN young Jones mentioned in the men's lounge that he had a straight bet of one pound with Basil on his chance of beating Phil Topham in the match, which was now front-page news in the Club, other men approached the challenger with hope in their hearts and pound notes in their hands, and before the day of the match Basil stood to win or lose over thirty pounds on the game. There was a general stipulation, however, that if the match were halved no money was to pass.

It was quite natural, therefore, when the two players stood on the first tee at two o'clock on the Saturday afternoon, that a large gallery should assemble to follow the match. And it was also quite natural that the crowd should put Basil off, for he had never driven off in front of a gallery before.

Topham hit a beauty straight down the middle, and Basil, having seen Etta Merton's congratulatory smile, missed his ball completely. He swung again and hooked violently into the rough. With a vicious number-eight he pulled his third on to the second fairway, while his opponent played a perfect number-six a foot from the pin.

Basil took out the brass putter, rubbed it quickly, and muttered: 'Hole this!'

The man in plus-fours appeared, looking positively alarmed. 'Have a heart! Why, we're a hundred and fifty yards from the green.'

Basil took a full swing with the putter, and the ball flew towards the green. He saw it drop on the fairway and the man in plus-fours chase after it. On towards the green he ran, dribbling the ball with the skill of a first league centre-forward, then he trapped the ball a foot from the pin and tapped it in. Topham, utterly amazed at the remarkable shot of his opponent, actually missed his

short putt, so Basil won the first hole with his stroke.

When a man unused to power is suddenly lofted into a position of high authority, he is liable to become Neronic, and Basil proved to be no exception to this rule. He hit a good drive at the second, eighty yards short of the green, took out his putter, rubbed it, and the man in plus-fours appeared instantly. Brandishing an angry fist he hissed: 'You utter ass, if you hole every approach they'll smell a rat!'

'Hole this,' Basil whispered as he hit the ball towards the green.

The ball was duly kicked into the tin, and those who had bets on the match looked aghast. Basil had holed two approaches, was two up, and if he continued his devastating play could not fail to beat his opponent.

Topham, visibly shaken, played out-of-bounds at the third, and, when they reached the green in four each, three-putted against his opponent's single twenty-yarder. When the fourth and fifth were also won by the now supremely confident Basil, Etta Merton decided to take a hand in the game. She moved towards Basil and smiled. That smile cost him the sixth. She touched his arm as they walked down the seventh fairway together, and the thrill of her hand made him lose that hole too. At the eighth he drove into the stream, and Topham, recovering his confidence, not only won that hole, but also the ninth and tenth to square the match.

The game swung level, for, every time Basil sank an approach or a long putt to snatch the lead, Etta Merton's fascinating presence caused him to lose the next hole. On the eighteenth tee he was one down for the first time, and Topham hit the longest drive of the match, well over two fifty yards right up the middle. He was certain to be on for two, and Basil had no stroke at the last hole. He suddenly banged his driver back in the bag and pulled out the brass putter. He rubbed it, and the man in plus-fours looked utterly dumbfounded when Basil muttered: 'Hole this!'

'You can't do a thing like that!' he cried. 'Drive off with a putter! And I'm right out of training and cannot possibly run three fifty yards at top speed. Anyway, what will people think if you get a hole of this length in one with a putter? It'll be in all the papers.'

Basil swung back and viciously clouted the

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ball. His outraged companion tore after it, and when it came down he kicked it furiously, chased after it, and kicked it again towards the green. At that moment the clock in front of the club-house showed that it was exactly five o'clock, and instantly the man in plus-fours vanished. With a sinking heart Basil realised that he was now left to his own resources, and that those resources were not to be depended on. He had one advantage only, the last kick given to his ball had sent it fifty yards ahead of Topham's, and another fifty yards would put him on the green.

Topham's approach stopped a foot short of the green, and Basil determined to play his second with the brass putter, for, after all, that was the club he had used most that day. He took a blind swipe at the ball, and did not dare look up until a murmur of excitement from the spectators told him all was well. He gazed at the green, and there was his ball six feet from the pin. In dead silence Phil Topham studied his short-approach, then with a perfect chip he ran his ball a foot from the hole and laid his opponent a dead stymie.

Basil stood on the green with his putter in his hand. Never in all his golfing life had he been able to negotiate a stymie, and he realised he was beaten. All he could do was

to run his ball to the left or right of the hole, but he couldn't sink it. He stood looking at the line and through habit rubbed his putter. Immediately the man in plus-fours appeared with an apologetic grin. 'Putt to the left of Topham's ball,' he advised.

Basil played nearly a foot to the left, his ghostly companion threw himself flat on the green, neatly guided the ball into the hole with his right hand, and the match was halved.

The whole gallery cheered the miraculous finish of a most remarkable game, for, although no money passed, everyone agreed he'd had his money's worth. The only thing that puzzled Basil was why the man in plus-fours had reappeared at the crucial moment to hole his putt. He never found out, for young Jones sneaked the brass putter from his bag to try it out on the first green. A sudden heavy shower made him run back to the club-house, and a boy sheltering in the hedge saw the putter on the green, made off with it and threw it into the quarry pond.

The reason why the man in plus-fours reappeared was, of course, perfectly simple. It was summer time, and the clock on the club-house was an hour fast by the time shown by the office clock of the Aladdin's Lamp Board, so the man in plus-fours had been sent back to finish his job.

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## Functions

*Flowed the hill evenly to the farmhouse,  
Crazed with clumps of variegated greenery  
Soused with late rain, and rippling  
And murmuring in the breeze's breath.  
Crippled, but beautiful, the furze stood,  
Solid and densely packed to the ground,  
With yellow eyes lidding out of the leaves  
And spiders spinning rainbows between.  
Haphazard the green frog hopped from my shoe,  
With black-orbed eyes in wondered glare,  
And glum set lips on flattened throat,  
Closed duck-feet clinging to tumbling twigs.  
Single the bee that nosed all round,  
Bunched energy buzzing in still, wet air,  
Now on the clover crouched like a suckling,  
Now hovering and smelling, then touching down—  
All those filling their natural functions,  
Happy in doing, in flowing with time.  
And I also filling my natural functions—  
Living and loving and happy in eye.*

W. McDERMOTT.

# Pearls of Great Price

## *Pearling in the Persian Gulf*

STEPHEN PETERS

THIS month, when the sandy shores of the Persian Gulf glow white-hot in the sun's glare, and the water is at blood-heat, pearls of great price are being plucked from the ocean-bed. Seven hundred ships are out on a fabulous treasure-hunt—sharp-prowed sambuks, with twenty hands aboard, richly-carved jerbuts, with space for a hundred on their wide decks. There they sprawl, with their long oars outstretched and a diver bobbing on a rope between each blade. The vessels look like monstrous water-spiders, and neither they nor the art of diving has changed a jot since Alexander's ships of war sailed the Gulf. Arab divers have no use for diving-suits or diving-bells. Day in, day out, the boats have been leaving the Gulf ports for the pearling-banks, the richest in the world. Let's take a launch at sunrise and board one of these ancient pearlers.

NOBODY takes the slightest notice of us as we make fast to the stern. We can't see the deck of the pearler for humanity. There must be seventy or eighty brown bodies, stripped to the loins. There is a sickening stench, made up of human sweat and rancid butter, decaying oysters and a reeking brew of herbs—the divers' unguent against skin disease.

There is the captain, or nochanda, sitting cross-legged on a raised bench. The divers hover near him, afraid to contaminate themselves by contact with the common crew, for the divers are the passengers-de-luxe, with the best sleeping-quarters, in the stern, and no obligation to lay hand to sail or oar. Their sole equipment is a horn peg, which, when clamped over the nostrils, prevents the penetration of water to the brain. They go over

the side, clutching a rope weighted with a stone. Down, down to a dozen fathoms, and there they remain for a hundred seconds, tearing the oysters off the beds.

The captain points out to sea. A shark's fin cleaves the surface, swerves nearer the ship, disappears. The shark has dived. Down there on the sea-bed the divers will be watching its gleaming stomach. The captain plays idly with a string of amber beads and gives the impression that he is about to drop off to sleep at any moment. The truth is that, though there are plenty of sharks in the Gulf, the divers are seldom touched. This big fish is merely curious; the teeming marine-life ensures that he is never really hungry. Occasionally, however, the divers have to cope with such alarming obstacles as stinging-rays and jellyfish, and the bright orange-and-black sea-snakes, highly poisonous, which one can see floating on the oily surface of the water.

The divers come up, shooting, like torpedoes, to the surface. Their baskets glitter in the sun. They clasp them, chins tucked in, legs pressed together, offering the minimum of resistance to the water. They do not climb back on board. They hand over the baskets to one of the crew, who empties their contents of five or six shells on to the deck, then throws the baskets back. The divers wait a bare thirty seconds. They take another deep breath, close their nose-clips, and, in another second, they have vanished.

They work in two shifts, the one man diving for half-an-hour and then being relieved by the other. They do that from sunrise to sunset and descend to the ocean bottom an average of one hundred and sixty times a day, for three months of the year. Absurd as it sounds, they firmly believe that they can breathe under water through their ears, and all of them

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have their ears pierced for the purpose. They do *not* die prematurely from lung disease. Mission doctors in the Gulf report that divers live their normal span, and their average age is about forty, though divers of fifty and sixty are not uncommon.

In addition to pearls, the Bahrein divers bring up fresh water from the bottom of the sea. There are, around the islands, submarine fresh-water springs in the shallower water. The divers go down with a closed goatskin and hold open the neck over one of the springs till the skin is full. Then they give the neck a twist with the cord to close the skin, and rise to the surface with the sweet water.

SOME of these divers have come recently from the desert, the first generation to dare to exchange the back of a camel for the deck of a ship. Many are freed slaves whose forefathers were bred in East Africa. But most are sprung from age-old diving families whose founders wore the nose-clip a thousand years ago.

They are full of jokes and laughter. They find time to hide a prickly sea-urchin among the oysters in their basket to prick the collector's fingers, or they bring up a splendid blue-and-yellow starfish to be admired by the captain's small son. Now and then the naham, or singer, breaks into a weird chant. The off-duty divers and crew-members collect in their separate groups on the deck. They stamp, clap their hands, bow to the rhythm, passionately absorbed, repeating the refrain in a deep bass.

The diver's diet is as strict as a jockey's, for a full stomach cannot stand the pressure of the water. Their only meal of the day is taken at sunset, and it consists of rice, stewed for four hours with dates, sea-water, and quantities of rancid butter, and garnished with fish roasted on the open fire. When they have supped together they all rise for the evening prayer. Ten minutes later the whole crew sleeps, tight-packed like herrings in a barrel.

In the bad old days the pearl-diver inherited debts from his father and bequeathed them, increased, to his children. There was a centuries-old iniquitous system whereby

advances were made by the boat-owners or merchants. Given the prodigal nature of the Arab, the rest was easy—continual debt and virtual bond-slavery. Some years ago, however, Shaikh Hamed of Bahrein insisted on reforms and broke these debt shackles. Today the diver is paid on a system similar to that prevailing among the Scottish share fishermen. Proper books are kept and his debts die with him. So the Bahrein divers, in spite of the wartime slump in the pearl trade, are now in a much better position than their fathers and grandfathers before them.

YEAR by year the Bahrein pearlers look anxiously to America and Paris to see how prices are going and what jewel fashions the women of the West are wearing, for on this barometer of money-cum-caprice depends the fishing and the fortunes of hundreds of Arab families in the Gulf. Just before the war the value of pearls annually exported was about £2,000,000. It then dropped catastrophically, but it is rising again, though it has not nearly got back to the old high levels.

At this time of the year Bahrein is visited by numerous Indian pearl-merchants, and the bargaining is done in the way that has been employed since the history of pearling began. In one of the countless little coffee-shops the Arab boat-owner unwinds his flowing turban, leaving his small round skullcap on top of his pate. He spreads out the cloth before the Indian merchant. Each man then puts his right hand under the cloth, and by means of grips and pressures the price of the pearl that is for sale is agreed upon. A full hand-grip means one figure; a touch on the palm, something else; a finger-grip, another figure; and so on. This dumb language under the turban ensures that the price is not overheard. When a price is agreed, the pearl in a little wisp of cloth is handed over to the purchaser, who may repay in rupee notes or give a cheque.

Finds of individual pearls worth £2000 are frequent in the Bahrein fisheries. The finest pearl discovered in the last hundred years was probably the one brought up by an Arab diver in the Gulf in October 1929. It was valued at £50,000.

# The Edwardian Literary Landscape

## II.—Galsworthy at Home

R. H. MOTTRAM

I HAVE told of meeting John Galsworthy in London,\* but I feel there are many who may wish to know how he lived and wrote at his ease, in the atmosphere he preferred.

No writer of distinction was less 'literary.' I know that he was scrupulous in his craft, meticulous in his use of our language, and for the purposes of necessary contacts with publishers and the theatre had a London home, the first at a bachelor studio in Campden Hill. After his marriage, he and his wife, Ada, took No. 14 Addison Road, then a flat in the Adelphi, finally Grove Lodge, Hampstead.

Those qualities, those domiciles, justify his inclusion in any list of literary notables. What then do I mean by saying he was not literary, and that his real home was elsewhere? I mean that he had just no use for the picturesque, garrulous, conscious *vie de Bohème* of Fleet Street, the Clubs, the periodicals of the profession of letters. The real home at which he and his wife spent at least half, and that the more productive, of their time was very different.

The road from Bovey Tracey to Moreton-hampstead winds among fields and hedges, but grows steeper as the country on either side changes to sheer primeval Dartmoor. The ridges among which the stream winds are crowned by rocky tors, with that characteristic tawny, couchant appearance of great petrified lions. The tree-overhung road becomes a tunnel in which Becky Falls echo. One emerges on the little green of Manaton village, complete with church and inn, and row of cottages around it. A few yards south and west a little drive through a scant planta-

tion leads to Wingstone, the house in which the Galsworthys lived.

It was such a house as can only be found, I think, in our island, and possibly more easily in Devon than elsewhere. Utterly unpretentious, it was innocently deceptive. If one arrived by the drive, as one frequently did, riding, one might pass straight into an old-fashioned farmyard, cobbled and ankle-deep as all such are, between two ranges of stone-walled buildings. Ahead, southward, a gate gave upon wild Dartmoor, and not many hundred yards across its boulders and bushes was that extraordinary monolith marked on the map as Bowermans Nose, looking almost human, or the work of human hands, and a landmark on the horizon. But if one turned left, just before the yard, through an archway, one came out upon the eastern aspect of the house, which had been built with some inclination towards gentility, if of local stone, and only to the height of two storeys. Here, a paved verandah, running from north to south, gave one of the more magnificent views even Devon can afford. From its kerb ran a small shaven lawn, with a few flower-beds that Ada tended so devotedly. Beyond that, an acre or so of enclosed but never level rough pasture sloped southward to the stream, whose sibilation was one of the charms of the place, almost mesmeric. More distant, left or northward, beyond the plantation and pasture wall, could be discerned the church tower, the few roofs and trees of the green, and dimly what the map calls Manaton Tor, and the inhabitants, Signal Rocks. Right or south, across the stream, ridge after ridge of tors, of which Hey Tor is the most conspicuous. But between, due east, beyond some trees and a hill crowned by a queer tower that may have been built for an observatory, or just as well might

\* See 'Edward Garnett at the Mont Blanc,' *Chambers's Journal* for May 1951.



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be a magician's, the prospect rolled away, always descending until, at perhaps a dozen miles or thereby, a tiny glint of blue sea gave warning, if it looked too brilliant, of bad weather.

The place, then, had an air of clinging to the last vestige of civilisation—or was it of slipping away into that beauty and freedom of wildness to which Galsworthy turned so avidly for inspiration and for escape from the works of man, so often disappointing. Max Beerbohm hit off his attitude, and perhaps gave the reason for his preference for this home that lasted twenty years, in the cartoon in which Galsworthy is seen confronted by a swinish-goatish pleading figure, with a crown of pearls over one ear. The caption is: 'Mr Galsworthy, envisaging Life, and giving it, for he is nothing if not judicial, credit for the very best intentions.'

WHEN one looked, in such a house, for the study an author is supposed to frequent, one found the verandah had three openings, the central one a door into the hall, right and left French-windows that lighted, and gave access to, the dining-room, southward, and the drawing-room, north, though they were not often alluded to so formally. In the dining-room, beside the table, was a great chair in which Galsworthy often sat, a divan against the inner wall. There was

also a peculiar contraption, not unlike a lay-preacher's pulpit, at which he meant to work standing, but which often served to bear manuscripts in various stages of completion. The other room held Ada's cottage Bechstein, on which, at his call, she would accompany his creative thought with sympathetically-selected music, her bureau, chairs, and music. All round the rooms were the few pictures, vases full of flowers, and bits of embroidered silk that only Ada could have chosen and disposed. Above, were two fair-sized bedrooms and one tiny one. That was all. For Galsworthy, and Ada only a little less, lived out of doors. If he worked all the morning, he rode most of the afternoons. Stern was the weather that stopped him. Ada sacrificed her ride if the spare horse was wanted for a visiting friend.

I close my eyes and feel beneath me the slackening of the jog-trot as he turns his beloved mare Peggy in by the stables. I descend stiffly and give my mount the ritual lump of sugar as the farm boy leads them away. I wash off the Dartmoor mud and descend to the candle-lit fireside, where Ada ceases her soft playing to pour out tea that will never taste so delicious again. I may drowse, but he returns to the dining-room to complete *Justice* or *In Chancery*. In the background, dim farmhouse noises. Outside, Dartmoor is still, except for the stream. That was Galsworthy at home.

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## The Dew

*Did you hear the dew soft falling  
As you walked the fields last night,  
As you watched beside the casement  
In the early morning light?  
For the softest footfall sounded  
In those quiet, twilight hours,  
One could almost catch the dreaming  
Of the softly-sleeping flowers.*

*But the dew had soundless coming,  
Falling as a silent thought,  
With a touch of mystic wonder  
Silently beloved and caught.  
Flowers stand crowned as though with teardrops,  
Grasses drenched with glistening light,  
Everywhere is bathed with beauty,  
Life holds promise of delight.*

HILDA L. EVERETT.



# Plassey Postmark

L. G. DURNO

ON a rainy day recently my wife and I were clearing rubbish from boxes in the attics, that hiding-place of missing things, when she remarked: 'I suppose you call this your stamp collection.'

Glad of any excuse to sit back, we spent some time examining and fully discussing this find, for I could see that it would not take a minute to glance through the one or two items thus clipped together. We paused longest over an envelope addressed to London, and bearing a pair of King George V one-anna stamps, chocolate in colour—liverish, the liverish used to complain during the hot weather—and postmarked 'PLASSEY 23 JUN...'. The other stamps were a booklet of unused King George VI values, pictures that represented the different ways in which His Majesty's mails were carried in India. Of these, we considered the most cheerful to be the pink two-annas, showing the Indian postman going across country. But that set was easily the most attractive ever issued for India, where stamps were inclined to be dull. We decided that we might keep the lot, and go on calling it a stamp collection. ('What will it be worth now?' inquired my wife.)

THE stamp showing the dak runner did not require brightening up by a postmark or anything else. Everyone who has been in India remembers the country postman as he carried the dak—the mail—from the thatched mud-wall hut, which sufficed as post-office in the village, to the sorting-office in the town or to the mail-van on the railway express. The runner's pace was a steady jog-trot. Often he was heard singing, quietly to himself, one of those endless songs such as were sung in days when soldiers marched. He was always barefooted, and on hot days wore only a loin-cloth. Over one shoulder was slung the sealed

mailbag, while his other hand grasped a spear. He never loosened his grip on either, and he never stopped to talk. Altogether, he was a busy but elusive man.

It was curious, too, why dak runners, one and all, still carried that spear, fitted with jingling bells on the shaft and a sharp point at the end. For in modern times only a few of them had to go by uncivilised routes where a leopard, or possibly a robber, might yet be lurking. Taking a general view, perhaps the weapon had become a traditional emblem; and I believe the runner had come to regard the bells as something to hearten him on his lonely way. Anyhow, we greatly admired this postman's honesty and contentment, for he did and dared all that at very little cost to the taxpayer.

If everyone has a vague but happy recollection of the dak runner, maybe just because he looked romantic, we could not recall, with any great comfort or feeling of romance, the dak bungalow—at any rate not the ordinary one. Its name originally denoted the roadside stage, where travellers might hope to receive and write their dak; clearly, those were the purposes emphasised, rather than the fact that it was usually a halting-place for the night. This wretched, depressing shelter was, however, also known as the rest-house, and he must have been a facetious man who set that name in fashion. Most of these places are best forgotten.

The envelope I was looking at contained a letter which had been written by me in Plassey dak bungalow. It was not an ordinary, but a pleasant, dak bungalow. In that same District of mine in Bengal all the others varied from the very ordinary to the downright unpleasant. Did anybody, for instance, really care about having to try and rest in the one at Chuadanga?

It was only sheer duty that made me put up

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in the last-named place. The building itself was not too bad, but I always wished that my wife had not told me that Rudyard Kipling had written a very eerie tale about Chuadanga dak bungalow. While in India, it was often a mistake to reread Kipling's stories: they were far too true. When we stayed at Chuadanga, the bungalow was a fairly modern red-brick thing, standing under tall, gloomy trees; these seemed to drip mournfully on to the roof all night long, whether it was in fact raining or not. ('Aw, forget it,' interrupted my wife.)

EVERYTHING at Plassey always looked serene. The dak bungalow stood on the battlefield, and had a garden that gaily blazed with flowers. Not another building was in sight; even the small village, a mile or so away, hid itself behind bamboo clumps and mango-trees. The rooms in the bungalow were bright and clean, for few people bothered to go and stay there; no sight-seeing visitors came, and only rarely some stray, perhaps rather lazy, official. There seemed little work to justify making it a touring centre, for it was up in a corner of the District: one boundary, invisible, lay a few miles north, and to the west was another, the River Hooghly, though that was never called anything except the sacred Ganges. Half-a-dozen straggling hamlets, besides that of Plassey, were scattered about in this remote angle.

It was lovely riding country all round there; we often brought our horses, and stayed for several days. From leading personality down to cultivator, the people were all very friendly and happy. They never rioted, but had an occasional light-hearted scuffle. They enjoyed good rice-crops, and learned to add to their income by growing sugar-cane on the battlefield. They punctually paid their rates, or enough to let the village policeman draw his salary. More to please my wife than themselves, or so it seemed, they had sunk a couple of wells, but they confided in me that they continued to find the Ganges water sweeter and infinitely more holy. There was also a reliable postal service. If, in addition to all that, they wanted anything more lively, a pleasant walk took them to the branch railway-station, where they might get a newspaper on the arrival of the bustling morning train. When the train was late, and it generally was, the station-master's Maréchal Niel roses were

always worth inspecting, as was also his wondrously fat white pony.

In the cool of the evening you could go for a stroll, exploring the old battlefield. That famous Viceroy, Lord Curzon, had done much to improve it. We still possess a snapshot of a tall marble obelisk; the picture is fading, but the inscription remains clear and unmistakable: 'Plassey, June 23rd, 1757.' Under Curzon's further directions, neat little affairs of brick, with a word or so written thereon, had also been dotted about to describe exactly how and where the opposing armies had been ranged. The enemy was Siraj-ud-Daula. Though the Black Hole had been settled months before, the Nawab was intriguing with our greater enemy, the French; the latter were backing him at Plassey, to the extent of lending him four small cannons, complete with French gunners. A copy of a map, made by some contemporary official, is hanging in the dak bungalow, and on it is marked the spot 'from whence the French Party cannonaded till 3 in the afternoon, when part of the British Army took post there, and the enemy retired.' How polite we officials have always been!

Outside in the fields, the position of this battery, which had carried out an unceasing bombardment, is indicated by some imitation guns in plaster. My aged bearer was unmilitary, but he believed in safety, refusing to stand in front of these pieces. Nor did he like the way in which the Frenchmen continued to lay their aim on the dak bungalow, and told me so, when, after breakfast, I was busy writing that letter to my wife, who was then doing her shopping in London.

It was June, the time when a hot and clammy stickiness is apt to hang all round until the monsoon gets into its full stride. It is the sort of date one would fain forget, but there on the envelope it still stands out clear, '23 Jun...' for later that day I myself took it to the Plassey post-office, where I was kindly permitted to observe that postmarks were not made in the slapdash manner one imagined. The letter had then been carefully put with others in the mailbag for the dak runner. I have no recollection, however, of any necessity for my being at Plassey, or what I inspected; yet I can hardly have gone for a mere whim.

THAT evening, as I sat outside in the garden enjoying a light breeze and a little refresh-

## PLASSEY POSTMARK

ment, I watched the shadowy figure of the dak runner as he padded quickly along the road across the battlefield towards the railway-station; he looked as if he meant to get there before dark. My letter would be in plenty of time for the down night-mail. In the gathering dusk the last few cultivators were disappearing homewards in a friendly group, and a fat Babu was definitely sprinting, intent on his supper. It all looked most peaceful, as a full moon rose from behind some heavy clouds; but the deserted scene made one thirsty again.

I seemed to be hurried through my solitary dinner; and the servants then retired to their quarters at the far end of the garden, where I could hear them bolting themselves in for the night. For a while I walked up and down the verandah. I did not feel like reading, as the oil-lamp gave a poor light, though plenty to encourage some large moths to flop around. Presently I heard the rumble of the night-train; it was more likely to be that than distant thunder, though for a moment it also recalled that absurd remark made by my old bearer that morning. I poured out a final drink. ('Bet you had one at dinner, too; so that's four,' calculated my wife.)

Shortly afterwards I began going to bed, and, before turning in, I took a last look outside. I was just in time to see a man in a long cloak riding on a white horse, silently and swiftly, towards the river-ferry. It would be the European manager of an estate over there in the other District; I had gone across the previous evening to call on him, but, so I was told, he was away in Calcutta, and not due

back for another two or three days. Obviously he had now returned unexpectedly, and his servants would get a bit of a shock. The only train at that time of night was indeed the south-bound one, that which had stopped to pick up my letter. But then, servants always get things wrong: the manager must have been on business in the north District, and, coming back sooner than he had intended, he would have borrowed the station-master's old white pony to take him home. Yes, that was who it was, obviously. . . .

**T**HERE was still a little soda-water left,' I said to my wife, as we sat on the attic floor, 'and, accordingly, I end this strange tale by stating that I hastily gulped it, and slept blissfully and soundly.'

'Thanks to the White Horse,' said she gently. My wife asked if I was waiting to be given a chance of adding that, because she said that she was not going to play any more. 'I can hear,' she explained, 'somebody calling that tea is waiting.'

As we passed downstairs, she stopped and looked thoughtfully at Colonel Clive—our 18th-century engraving of him in uniform and of the battle going on in the background. 'You see that dark stain,' she said. 'It's on the mount and not on the glass, as you will discover after tea, when you might go over the other pictures, too. About the stain, if later you mix us a cocktail, I will tell you a queer story of something I always notice on the evening before Midsummer Day.'

## Swallows

*Graceful swallow  
Swooping past,  
Deft and sure  
And flying fast:*

*Symbol of a  
Thought, in kind;  
Symbol of a  
Girl in mind.*

*Wind from swiftly  
Flowing wing  
Fans the soul's  
Imagining:*

*Invisible the  
Wind that blows;  
Invisible the  
Thought that flows.*

*O! bird, or sylph,  
With thee I trace  
The flash and flow  
Of flying grace:*

*And to my soul  
Swift beauty sings  
Of swallows and  
The grace of wings.*

JAMES MACALPINE.

# The Welsh Folk Museum

DEWI MORGAN

I ONCE knew a very delightful old antique-dealer. His great joy was silver which had passed its hundredth birthday. I often felt that he resented having to sell it. But he had to make a living. There was one precaution he invariably took, however. Before letting any of his treasures pass out of his hands he always tried to extract a promise that if the purchaser no longer wanted the article he himself would be given the first chance of buying it back. 'Or, in any case,' he added without fail, 'do not let it get into the hands of a museum.' For a long time I suspected mercenary motives in this. Then I discovered the truth. He felt that once anything went into a museum it lost its life and character. He was not alone in this opinion. The words 'something out of a museum' have their very clear meaning.

We have come to regard museums as repositories of curios, which sometimes merely excite a smile, or as refuges of old-fashioned objects which now have little more than a sentimental value. The old quip that a museum is a curiosity-shop where the weapons of the South Sea islanders jostle the skull of Oliver Cromwell and where butterflies are mixed up with Queen Elizabeth's stockings has for too long been justified. The first Director of the National Museum of Wales stated that 'the chief aim of men called to service in museums is to awaken the best in the national spirit.' This awakening can be attained only by education supplemented by an appeal to the feelings—and feelings can never be evoked by the somewhat sepulchral atmosphere of a mere storehouse of dead things.

WALES has long been able to rejoice in its National Museum. The noble building, of silvery Portland Stone, stands supreme

even in the nobility of Cardiff's Cathays Park. Nor does the splendid exterior surpass the impressive spaciousness of the interior. Furthermore, the Museum has at all times been served by a staff who have been enthusiastic and expert devotees rather than mere salaried officers.

Yet there has always been something lacking. Perhaps the very majesty of the building has dominated the ordinary man. Perhaps it is the unreality, in 1951, of being somewhere where one cannot smoke. Perhaps the existence of a pane of glass between the onlooker and the exhibits has too violently destroyed the sense of being a part of it all. One has rarely had the feeling of being a modern representative of the culture and traditions displayed in the well-ordered galleries. The sense of continuity has been lost.

It is some forty years since the celebrated Dr F. A. Bather said: 'It is not enough to show and preserve things that have been; it is necessary to trace their organic unity with the things that are and the things that shall be. An object that has once been used, and formed, indeed, a necessary part of the domestic economy of some human household, when placed behind the glass on a museum shelf becomes a mere curio. It does not appeal to us in the same way as the allied object which we daily use ourselves. . . . It is time for us to get rid of the idea that a museum is a place for the preservation only of that which is dead. It may be well to preserve objects because they represent a past that had utterly vanished—objects that may gratify a more or less intelligent curiosity, but can never be of any practical use to human beings. But it is of more importance that a museum should preserve objects capable of yielding some lesson for use in our own time. And still more important is the preservation of arts, industries, and customs, which, from

## THE WELSH FOLK MUSEUM

their truly national character, afford the firmest foundation for the national life of the future.'

It is a matter of great pride to Wales that the first museum in Great Britain to make a really serious attempt to do this is her own National Museum. The Welsh Folk Museum, which the National Museum has established at St Fagans, has already become famous. It is now attracting about a thousand visitors a day even though it is only two years old.

THE idea of the folk museum was first developed in the Scandinavian countries, more especially in Sweden. During the 19th century a vigorous movement to strengthen the national culture sprang up in that country. In 1873 a Museum of Swedish Folk Life, known now as the Northern Museum, was opened in Stockholm. In 1891 this was supplemented by the famous Skansen, a true folk museum. At Skansen are to be found old houses and buildings from different epochs, removed from their original sites. The buildings are furnished and maintained as they were in their heyday. Alongside them are contemporaneous workshops, where craftsmen follow the old methods. At Skansen, too, there is a national theatre for the production of Swedish plays; there is a place for folk dancing; there is a place for festivals and national conferences; there is even a zoological garden, though this is not limited to Swedish animals only.

The real folk museum exists in two parts. There is, first of all, the building where the materials of life and culture are systematically and scientifically displayed, where the research student can find all his data. On the other hand, there is the large tract of land where all the ancient buildings can be re-erected and cared for, together with the facilities for developing every activity which has characterised the people. It is not surprising that great social activity should emanate from such a museum. To quote Dr Bather again: 'When the folk museum takes the lead in the preservation of all the old national arts and crafts, singing and dancing, there is no need to fear that these human activities will simply be pigeon-holed, labelled, and brought out from time to time as curiosities for the amusement of a gaping crowd; but from the museum they will again pass out through the land, all that is good in them revived.'

Great Britain has been slow to copy this new form of museum. There was once a strong movement to create a folk museum at the Crystal Palace, but it came to nothing. Perhaps it is because Wales is a small country, perhaps it is that Welshmen are more nationally conscious—whatever the reason, there had long been an urge to set up a Welsh folk museum. The beginnings were made by a collection of old Welsh implements, ornaments, and so on, at the National Museum of Wales. In 1929 was published the *Guide to the Collections of Welsh Bygones*. This had a powerful influence in stimulating the zeal for preservation, and the Welsh-Folk Collection grew rapidly. In 1930 the Museum Council sent two of its members to Sweden. On their return they pressed for a Welsh folk museum. Two years later the National Museum was enlarged and the National Folk Collection placed in the new galleries. In addition, a series of reconstructions—four farmhouse rooms, a smithy, and a wood-turner's shop—were set up within the National Museum building. In 1932 a Sub-Department of Folk Culture was instituted. In 1936 this became a full Department of Folk Life.

In 1946 all the faith, hope, and efforts were rewarded. The young Earl of Plymouth, whose family had long been honourably associated with the National Museum, offered St Fagans Castle and its eighteen acres of gardens to the National Museum of Wales as a centre for a Welsh folk museum. Following upon that a further eighty acres of adjacent land were acquired.

The present Director of the Welsh Folk Museum, Dr Iorwerth Peate, has said: 'It is not an exaggeration to say that the site of the Welsh Folk Museum is, for its particular purpose, among the best in Europe.' That is a claim which can easily be justified. The very delightful and unspoiled village of St Fagans is just four miles from Cardiff, home of the National Museum of Wales, and stands on the edge of the beautiful Vale of Glamorgan, so rich in tradition. The village was the scene of a desperate conflict between Cromwellian soldiers and Welsh Royalists, which was Wales's biggest battle during the Second Civil War.

ST FAGANS CASTLE was founded in the Norman period. By the time of the 16th-century Leland it had become very dilapidated. Soon after Leland's visit it was bought by



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a certain John Gibbons, who is believed to have built the present mansion. In 1616 its owner sold it in order to raise funds to furnish the last expedition of Sir Walter Raleigh to Guiana. In 1730 it passed into the hands of the Earl of Plymouth, whose family retained it until 1946. The first excellence, then, of the Welsh Folk Museum is that it has been begun with the greatest and most expensive exhibit of all. Whereas the museum at Skansen started with a cottage, St Fagans started with a home of the landed gentry—and that not in dilapidated condition but with the hearth scarcely cold after its last inhabitants. Further, on that very site a wealthy family had lived for nearly a thousand years.

From the entrance one sees a tree-lined avenue, which ends in an arch once part of the old curtain-wall. Behind this rises a dignified example of a many-gabled Elizabethan dwelling-house. In Wales, and particularly in Glamorgan, it was the invariable custom to whitewash houses of all sizes, which was probably the reason why Rice Lewis, writing in 1596, should describe St Fagans as a 'faire house.'

Passing the main entrance we go round to the side of the house and enter an iron-studded door, dating from 1670, to find ourselves in a large kitchen, furnished in 16th-century style. It has two enormous fireplaces—such kitchens sometimes had more than two—and all the features of a room concerned exclusively with the preparation of food. There are spits of various types—weight-driven, dog-driven, driven by a horizontal chimney-vane motivated by the hot rising smoke, and so on. Even though there is no smell of cooking, one can easily believe that the servants have left it merely for a moment. The place looks lived in.

From the kitchen into the back hall, past the 18th-century sedan chairs and settles, and so through to the hall. This is furnished in 17th-century style and would, in those days, have been the room where the family and servants met for meals. This room also contains several fine pieces of 15th-century furniture.

Next comes the withdrawing room, to which the family retired for privacy and for the pursuit of such arts as music and embroidery. The triple harp and the virginal are still there, ready for the next performance, while the Flemish tapestries on the walls would inspire any needlewoman.

On the first floor we enter first an 18th-century bedroom, with its painted panelling and finely carved frieze, thence to the parlour, also with its carved friezes and tapestries. From the library, with the book on the table left open at the right page, we go through a 17th-century bedroom, where the bed, which has always been at St Fagans, is hung with some superb examples of embroidery dated 1670. From this bedroom we go to the long gallery, which extends from the main to the back staircase. The chief purpose of a long gallery has always been the display of tapestries, pictures, and furniture. At the present the exhibits in this gallery go down to about 1830.

Another room which is open to the public at St Fagans is devoted to the systematic display of case exhibits—more like the formal, traditional museum. Most of the items here illustrate the growth of the folk museum movement.

LEAVING the castle, there are still the grounds to be explored. These illustrate the spacious setting of a nobleman's life and must be considered as part of the exhibit. The typically 18th-century fishponds, the wooded slope, the terraced walks, the rose-garden, the battlement walk, the mulberry grove—they all have their attractions. It is intended to stock the ponds with coarse fish as mediaeval stewponds. The herb garden, Elizabethan in character, will be maintained. As time goes on, various ancient buildings, no longer cared for in their original sites, will be transferred stone by stone to these grounds. Whole village scenes will be reconstructed. At the present moment the ancient Esgairmoel woollen factory in Breconshire is being removed to St Fagans, while negotiations have been opened to acquire an ancient chapel from West Wales and an historic cottage from Port Talbot.

In the Museum grounds, too, one will be able to see the old craftsmen working in the old ways—as well as in the new. Already there are a wood-turner, who works with the traditional pole-lathe as also with the modern electric lathe, and a basket-maker. You may buy the wooden spoon or wicker basket when you have seen it being made. And in the restaurant you may enjoy mulberry tart made from fruit grown a hundred yards away.

The whole point of St Fagans is its reality.

## TROOPING THE COLOUR

The four-poster beds look as if they are ready to sleep in, the goose is roasting on the turnspit—you can almost smell it. And the Welshman feels he is no interloper. He is only looking back at yesterday; he is going

home. In a world of mass-produced furniture, of mass-produced pleasures, and even of mass-produced thoughts, St Fagans stands as a beacon, illumining all that justifies the existence of a nation.

# Trooping the Colour

Major T. J. EDWARDS, M.B.E., F.R.Hist.S.

WITHOUT doubt one of London's most spectacular events is the annual ceremony of Trooping the Colour in honour of the King's official birthday in June. When the weather is fine, the guardsmen's uniforms make the occasion truly colourful, and even when it is not, and the drabber greatcoats have to be worn, the precision marching and parade music lend the pageant an impressiveness seldom witnessed in other Service ritual.

When the ceremony takes place one generally hears and reads that it originated in guard-mounting. This is quite erroneous, for 'Lodging the Colour,' as it was formerly called, existed as early as the 16th century, whereas formal guard-mounting was not introduced, in relation to this ceremony, until the middle of the 18th century.

In the days of long ago, Trooping the Colour had a practical purpose, but now that Colours are no longer carried in action, owing to the improvement in musketry in the 1880's, the various movements are symbolic only.

Regimental Colours are the memorials to the great deeds of a regiment and the symbol of its spirit as expressed in those deeds. When the Colours were carried on active service, acts of heroic self-sacrifice were often performed in their defence, for they were the rallying-point of a regiment and the scene of its last stand. From this association with deeds of epic gallantry has emerged an attitude of reverence towards Colours, well expressed in some lines written by Lieutenant-

General Sir Edward Hamley on seeing certain old Colours hanging in a church:

*A moth-eaten rag on a worm-eaten pole,  
It does not look likely to stir a man's soul—  
'Tis the deeds that were done 'neath the  
moth-eaten rag,  
When the pole was a staff and the rag was a  
flag.*

As Andrew Ross says in *Old Scottish Regimental Colours* (1885): 'The flag is a symbol, intrinsically valueless—extrinsically priceless.'

PERHAPS the earliest writer to deal with lodging Colours and similar ensigns carried in the field was Sir John Smythe, who compiled his *Instructions, Observations, and Orders Militarie* in 1591. Writing of the duties of the ensign-bearer, he laid it down that 'when he cometh to the place where he shall lodge he must, with great respect and reverence, take the standard and place it in his lodging under a strong and verie convenient garde of soldiers, and so likewise in the morning upon the occasion of dislodging, he himselfe, being stronglie accompanied, ought to take the standard into his own hands and to march and take his place.' It is clear from this excerpt out of a 16th-century military classic that Colours were lodged in the same sense as were the troops.

Captain Thomas Venn was an old and very experienced soldier when he published his

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*Military Observations and Tactics* in 1672; in fact, he was serving in the army in 1641. Dealing with what we now call Colours, he states: 'The ensign hath this Dignity, to have a Guard ever about it, which no officer hath; neither is it to be dislodged, or unlodged, without a special guard attending upon it, both of musqueteers and pikes.'

The ceremony of Lodging the Colour was incorporated into the formal parade of guard-mounting in 1755, and it was this that led to a change in terminology. In the Standing Orders for the Army of that year it was laid down that when the ensign goes for the Colour the drummers will beat a 'troop.' This 'troop' was a piece of drum music, which later evolved into band music; hence it gradually became the practice to refer to the ceremony as Trooping the Colour, instead of as Lodging the Colour. It is this change in style which has given rise to the erroneous belief that Trooping the Colour *originated* with guard-mounting, whereas, as shown by the quotation from Sir John Smythe's work, the equivalent existed in 1591. As Sir John was merely recording his views on contemporary practice, this item of army ritual must have been well established in the 16th century.

The alteration in terms was not officially recognised until the beginning of the 19th century, for as late as 28th November 1810 the Guards Brigade Orders stated: 'When the Colours of the King's Guard are *lodged* at Retreat beating and dismounting they are always to be Trooped.' This was, however, probably the last order containing the expression 'lodged' in connection with Colours.

THOSE who have witnessed the ceremony of Trooping the Colour, whether in London or elsewhere, would have noticed that after the officer has received the Colour from the Sergeant-Major he marches in slow time along the front of the troops on parade. In other days, when Colours were carried in action by each company, it was essential for all soldiers to know what their Colours looked like, as the Colours were the rallying-point in a crisis and the place where their commanding-officer would be found. The Colour was therefore trooped around the company slowly

so that its hue and distinctive features could be noted. This ancient practice is now symbolised by the Colour being trooped in slow time along the front of the parade.

Modern Colours are much smaller than they were two hundred years ago. To-day, they are three feet deep and three feet nine inches wide. In 1768, they were six feet deep and six feet nine inches wide. A reduction of six inches each way occurred in 1855, and a further reduction in 1858 to three feet six inches deep by four feet wide. The present measurements were introduced in 1868.

During the Peninsular War period (1808-1814), and for several years before and after, Colours were normally carried by young officers between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years—mere lads, without much strength, who found it very difficult to carry the Colours upright. When in 1803 Major-General Sir John Moore, of Corunna fame, was asked for his opinion on some new regulations he wrote to the Adjutant-General at the War Office that 'in our Service the Ensigns are the youngest, least experienced and most giddy of the officers of a regiment, and our Colours are so large and unwieldy that it is next to impossible to carry them upright and steady.' And Captain Cooke of the 43rd Light Infantry (now 1st Bn. The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry) tells us in his Memoirs that he joined his regiment in 1805, a month before his fourteenth birthday, and that a year later 'the venerable Earl Fitzwilliam, Colonel of the Regiment, was at a party when I was introduced to him. He enquired whether I did not find the Colours very heavy in my hands. My face instantly coloured up; the fact was, I had been blown down, Colours and all, while at a field day at Ashfield in Kent.'

Sometimes these boy officers were carried off the ground when a sudden gust of wind struck their huge Colours. But whatever these gallant lads may have lacked in strength, they were never wanting in courage on the battlefield, and regimental histories proudly chronicle their extraordinary bravery in epic struggles 'around the Colours,' now symbolised in the young officer who bears the revered emblem in the ancient ceremony of Trooping the Colour.

# The Marriage of Goi-goi

ETHEL LATHAM

'MEMSARB, I'm about to be married,' my house-boy Mungai announced, in the up-country Swahili patois.

He stood by the table in the dining-room of our Kenya bungalow, polishing the drinking-glasses with a cloth taken from round his neck. He had recently learned that it is not considered desirable to breathe on the inside of the goblet to obtain a high polish; I hoped to teach him later not to breathe on the outside either, as he was now doing.

He stepped back to admire the way in which he had set the table. It was almost pure Kikuyu, in which there are only slight concessions to European conventions. In the middle of the general confusion rose a large, black, native-pottery jar, out of which loomed towering agapanthus stems, which would spread their formidable blue blossoms over our heads as we sat at table.

'Yes, memsarb, I shall be a married man within a day or so. My bride is the elder daughter of Chief Josephus. She is beautiful, but costly. As dowry I am giving the father cattle to the value of thirty pounds sterling. What does the memsarb say to that?'

'The memsahib is surprised, Mungai. She would not have supposed that you had so much money.'

'Oh, well, I have saved large sums received from Sir Mary Sardine, the noble money-broker of Nakuru, for my services as his number one boy. These and the smaller sums given me by the lesser bwanas are sufficient for me to . . . haaa, haaa, haaa.' He breathed on a goblet and rubbed it vigorously till it cracked. I recognised the bank-manager, Mr Murray-Jardine, in the name of Mungai's lavish former employer, and discounted the amounts said to have been earned.

'The memsarb must see the wedding-cake. At first it had the words "Good Luck" and

the shoe of a horse on the top. I gave the confectioner instructions to remove these and write suitable words in their place.' When I went into the kitchen to view it, on the table reposed a large cake covered with white icing, on which in pink sugar was the inscription: MUNGAI TO HIS BRIDE, £1 17 6.

'It was produced by the confectioner at—'

'Exactly. But what has Mpishi produced for dinner?' I inquired.

Mungai glibly reeled off the names of various European dishes. 'Oah, there is poudingi with raisings sauci, savouri cheesi-ontosti (the old standby!), kuku (chicken) castoroili, three vegs, and a soupi of peasi-powder. Kahawa (coffee) will be served on the verandah.' He waited for approval.

'Excellent.' I said. 'And lo, the Bwana comes! You may serve dinner.' Mungai did so, but in reverse order, clad in his spotless white kanzu, with an embroidered Arab cap set at a jaunty angle on his prominent Kikuyu brow, and a pensive smile on his shrewd little brown face.

WHEN dinner was over, the Bwana and I sat on the verandah, sipping our Kenya coffee. There was a gorgeous sunset, and we watched the red dust rising in its ruddy light from the lane leading down from the main road. There was an unusually large cloud of dust that evening. It moved along the road, turned into our lane, and very slowly came down the rise. As it neared the bungalow, a number of animal legs and tails could be seen in the cloud, and a little above them ears and horns. 'There would appear to be a small herd in that dust,' my husband remarked to me.

'Bwana, it is my herd!' excitedly cried Mungai, who had dashed round to the front

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from the back of the house. 'It is the herd I am giving for the elder daughter of Chief Josephus.'

'And you have had it brought here, I see. All very well, but has it been dipped?' the Bwana anxiously asked.

'Oh, yes. Well dipped at Londiani. The herd-boy is with the cattle. He will tell the Bwana that it was done.'

Through the thick dust we saw a stalky native youth leading in the collection. He brought it smartly round the curve, halted it by a light blow with his prod on the nose of the first cow, and stood at attention. In the next moment, a lad exactly like him, dressed the same, in ragged khaki shorts and a singlet stiff with sweat and dirt, came from the rear, and stood at attention beside him. They rolled their eyes at Mungai, and he rolled his at them.

'These boys are identical twins. Allowed to survive upon birth, eh? Very interesting indeed,' observed the Bwana. 'What are their names?'

'John,' replied Mungai.

'This one, on the right? And the name of the other?'

'John.'

'They are not both named John?'

'Yes, Bwana. John is one person twice. Naturally, he has the one name twice.'

John smiled engagingly. The Bwana was visibly taken aback. 'The herd must not remain here long, Mungai. Are you very sure it has been dipped?'

'Very sure. It could stay here to-night, and to-morrow John could take it to the village of Josephus, two hours' journey on foot from here.'

'Very well. Put the cows in the further boma, and give them grass and water. To-morrow they must go. It is an order.' Mungai grandly waved his hand, and the little herd was led away by one-half John, the other half bringing up the rear.

Early in the morning we heard the patter of hoofs and the shouts of the herd-boy, and knew that the bride's dowry was on its way to her father's village.

AT four o'clock the same afternoon, as my husband and I sat at tea on the verandah, there came down the lane a grizzled native riding a hard-driven pony. It was Chief Josephus, an old acquaintance of ours. The

usually pacific old man was scowling and breathing hard, possessed by some inner rage. He drew rein before the steps, and howled loud abuse, in the vernacular, using evil-sounding words, and flourishing a heavy kiboko, the dreaded hippo-hide whip. 'Where is that fool, that rat Mungai?'

The Bwana rose, set down his cup and saucer, and went to stand on the top step. 'Shauri nini, Josephus?' he sternly asked, meaning 'What is the matter, Josephus?' 'Is this the way you address a Government-Bwana? The memsahib is present, too. Be civil, old man, or I shall not answer you.'

The irate chieftain dismounted, and came to the bottom step, one hand at his leopard-skin cap in a hasty salute. 'Sorry, Bwana! Sorry, sorry! My heart is sore. I have been cheated, yes, cheated by that rascal who wishes to wed my elder daughter. Has the Bwana seen the cattle he sent to my village as dowry for Nyota, my Star of Beauty? They came up here, so I was told.'

'At the time there was so much dust that I did not see them well.'

'Bwana, they are thin, they are sick, they are useless. They are not worth the thirty pounds sterling Mungai declares he paid for them.'

'I do not think he said he had paid that amount. He only claimed that they were worth it.'

'It is the same thing. I have brought his cows back to him, and he shall not have my beautiful daughter. See, it comes, his miserable herd. You shall judge for yourself, Bwana.'

Sure enough, the familiar dust-cloud was again moving along the road, Mungai's weary cows within it, followed by a crowd of shouting, laughing tribesmen. A little behind was a group of five women mounted upon small, mincing ponies. The Bwana looked at the approaching cavalcade, and, going into the bungalow, called Mungai. 'Chief Josephus refuses to accept your cattle, which he says are worthless. He is very cross with you. What have you to say?'

Mungai stopped short in the doorway, and took in the situation. 'Ow!' he yelled. 'The old skellum!'

'They are bags of bones creeping on sticks,' cried the chief. 'They are dying on their hoofs, they—'

The Bwana held up his hand, and stopped him. 'Silence. The herd is coming. Pre-



## THE MARRIAGE OF GOI-GOI

sently we shall see what it is like.' My husband had recently been sworn in as a Special Policeman, known as Government-Bwana. This gave him authority to pursue and arrest the thieves that infest the maize-fields, if he could catch them, and he was disposed to take full advantage of the prestige the title gave him.

**H**AND-IN-HAND, John came down the lane first, a crestfallen John, who had been demoted as herd-boy and deprived of his prod. The cows, urged on by a ruthless native, ambled dispiritedly into the space in front of the bungalow, and lay down. When the dust had settled, Government-Bwana, accompanied by the angry chief, Mungai, and John, went over to conduct an investigation.

'I do not find these cows worthless, Josephus,' the Bwana said emphatically. 'It is true they are thin, and the hump of the zebu bull lamentably hangs over; moreover, many of them are very young, but that is a fault that will pass. The grazing-grounds near your village are the finest in the district. Within a month the cows will be sleek and fat, and the hump of the zebu erect and strong.'

'Ah-haa!' crowed Mungai and John.

'Oh, Bwana, how can you say such things!' growled Josephus. 'If it were not that you are now of the Government, and very powerful, I would say that you I—'

'Tut, tut!' interrupted Government-Bwana. 'Do not say what you would ever after regret, old man.'

Josephus sprang forward, and, striking the flank of one of the cows with his kiboko, forced it to struggle to its feet. It stood for a moment, and then obstinately sank again. 'There. You see. It is dying,' declared Josephus. The beast was very tired, but it most certainly was not dying.

'What do you consider the herd to be worth, Josephus?'

'Oh, master, do not let him appraise my herd,' moaned Mungai.

'Silence!' roared the Bwana.

Just then the bevy of women who had followed the train came through the crowd of tribesmen, and the buxom Star of Beauty moved forward, and grinned at Mungai. 'Look at her!' cried her father. 'Look at my beautiful one. Is she not worth two herds of fine cattle? What does this house-boy mean by offering me a miserable mixed assortment

of cows for her? No, no! I will not accept them.'

'What do you think the herd is worth?' patiently repeated Government-Bwana.

Cupidity glistened in the eyes of the crafty old savage. 'At the most it is worth a bare twenty pounds. Let Mungai give me another ten pounds, and he shall have my daughter.'

Mungai wailed in anguish, but he could not bear to think of losing his bride. 'I should not do it! When I have paid for the wedding-cake, the sheep and the beer for the feast, and have given backshishi to Bishop Jiroge for performing the ceremony, my money will be nearly gone. Four pounds is all I can give, no more.'

'I will accept the four pounds,' said the chief, coming down in his price. But there was a condition attached. 'Four pounds I will accept, provided that your servant also marries my younger daughter, Goi-goi.'

Mungai jumped as if he had been stung by a snake. 'Oh, Bwana! Oh, memsarb, I cannot marry Goi-goi! I do not love her.' Running over to the women, Mungai took one of them by the hand, and led her out. 'Look at her. Is she not indeed "goi-goi"—crooked?' The poor child had one shoulder much higher than the other, and one leg longer than the other leg. But she had a nice face, and a pleasant smile.

Josephus was firm. He was playing the part of the careful parent who wishes to see both his daughters well settled in life. 'He takes the younger, or he does not get the elder,' he insisted.

Mungai became thoughtfully silent. He was looking at John, and a purpose was forming in his mind. 'Very well,' he said finally. 'I will give this old robber four pounds, and take Goi-goi as well as Nyota.' He drew forth the notes from his little pocket-book and held them out to Josephus, who received them with an air of assumed reluctance.

'But,' Mungai went on, 'my heart is sore. This estate is my home; Government-Bwana and the memsarb are my father and mother. I do not like to go among unkind people. I ask that the wedding take place here, instead of in the village of Josephus.' The Bwana and I consulted each other in a brief look, and cheerfully gave consent.

When this wish of his future son-in-law was made clear to the chief he sullenly remounted, saluted stiffly, and rode scornfully up the lane,

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and, refusing to speak to Nyota and Goi-goi, left his daughters behind. He was followed by the three other women, and the giggling tribesmen, who had stirred the herd into activity.

MUNGAI'S bride and her crooked little sister came and knelt before me as I sat on the verandah, and putting the palms of their hands together laid them in my lap, mutely asking for protection. But Mungai came up and led Goi-goi down the steps again and turned to John. 'My brother, I give Goi-goi to you, for she is now mine to give away, if I like. Take her. She will be a good wife; she is skilled in work of many kinds, and she brews magnificent beer.'

John was delighted, and broadly smiled, showing most of his sixty-four milk-white teeth. Then he and Mungai went into a huddle, from which they broke to race round to the servants' quarters. Presently they came back, John clothed in snowy wedding garments quite evidently abstracted from my reserve stock of kanzus.

Goi-goi, who was still standing in the same spot, took the right hand of one-half John in her left, and the left of the other half of John in her right hand, and stood between the

halves, looking very happy and important.

My husband had gone inside to mix the sundowners. When he came out, carrying them, he looked with amusement at the quaint little group of three. But Mungai boasted of his generosity, and Government-Bwana was scandalised. 'What?' he thundered. 'You can't do that!' He glared at me as if it were all my fault. 'If this tribe is developing a tendency to plural husbands it must be stopped at once.'

He was furious, and I was a little afraid of what he might say or do. I beckoned to Mungai, and he came and stood before us. 'My boy,' I said, very gravely, 'you know as well as the memsahib does what twins are. John is actually two persons, though you all call him one. The tribal laws are strict: they say that no woman may have more than one husband at a time. To which John have you given Goi-goi?'

'I do not know,' unhappily answered Mungai. 'Since his mother died, only John can tell himself apart. But don't worry, memsahib,' he added kindly. 'When they are united I will ask the Bishop to marry them one at a time, and I will fasten an anklet of brass on the foot of Goi-goi's bridegroom. Then they will both always be able to tell which John is the husband.'

---

## Ma Hert is Bien

*Quaet as an island in a simmer sea,  
Tempest-forleitit, ma weel-willin' hert  
Liggs saftly lappeder bi the thoct o' ye,  
Albeit ye'll nivver haud agen this alrt.*

*Lang deid's the day that ye beginkit me;  
But gin ye lippen til the sweelin' tide,  
An' hear in'ts hert-beat love's eternitie,  
Syne ye an' me are ane whaure'er ye bide.*

*Ilk while the win' aboot the eastle's sighin',  
Gin ye can ca' tae min' the yome o' pines,  
An' see aince mair the reid-broon branches swyin',  
Syne, O ma dear, nae a' the seas can twine's.*

*Sae gang yer gait, untentie o' ma bein':  
It isna in yer pooer tae mischieve me.  
Ma hert is bien whate'er the weird I'm dreelin',  
Bieldit aboot bi yer fond memorie.*

ELIZABETH T. DAWSON.

# Miracles of Concrete

E. H. TREWEEKS

IT was nearly a hundred years ago when the young genius, Joseph Tall, took H.R.H. the Prince of Wales round his new concrete-making factory in Southwark. The factory had aroused considerable interest, both at home and abroad, for its owner was barely out of his teens. While still at school, he had thought of reinforcing concrete floors with hoop-iron, and, aided by his relations, had taken out his first patent and had set up a business.

He chose Bexley Heath as the site for his earliest concrete house, but this was not a success. He continued to experiment, however, and his business started to flourish. The public's confidence was rather shaken, though, by a series of accidents, which resulted in several lives being lost. Tall had made some rather wild claims about the strength of his material, saying that it was several times as tough as the ordinary house-building ones. Certain builders took this rather too literally. They made their walls much too thin, as a consequence of which the structures collapsed.

Tall's own work increased rapidly, and he was soon able to erect his Southwark factory. By the time he was twenty-one he had built several types of houses in various parts of the country and amassed a fortune of £30,000. Among others who later visited the works was the famous scientist T. H. Huxley, who brought Charles Dickens with him. Tall's method was to use a simple system of shuttering supported by vertical girders at the corners, the space between them being filled with the concrete mixture. When this had set, the shutters were moved upwards and the process repeated until the required height had been reached.

As some of Tall's contemporaries had found, a structure made out of concrete alone was able to stand great pressure as long as the

strains did not tend to bend it sideways. This limitation is overcome by embedding steelwork in the mixture, so that the concrete takes the weight, while the steel bears all the pulling and bending stresses. The inner secret of concrete lies in the chemical change that takes place in the cement, brought about by the water which is added to the aggregate of sand and gravel. The mixing covers everything with the wet cement; when setting, this binds it all into a rock-like substance.

Although reinforced concrete has been one of man's best building materials for nearly a century, only in recent years has it been used on such a vast scale as in great irrigation and hydroelectric dams all over the world and in large buildings like Earl's Court. New blocks of flats are still apt to be hailed as the latest thing in housing, but Joseph Tall was building them in Paris during the time of Napoleon III.

Disaster stepped in several years later when Tall formed a company to run the business. Although it was flourishing at the time, things got out of hand, and in four years he found himself penniless and, further, without any means of making a fresh start. His patents, of which he had by now filed twenty, began to lapse, and he was forced to find work as a painter and decorator. With advancing age he became unemployed and wandered all over England in search of jobs. On one occasion, as a crowning irony, he received assistance from a person in a concrete house which he himself had built.

TALL died a forgotten man, but the material he had done so much to popularise was being used on an ever-increasing scale. At the turn of the century the age of concrete was in full swing.

As is the case with some other 'modern'

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ideas, knowledge of this material dates back to beyond the days of the Romans. Genuine fragments of concrete belonging to prehistoric times have been found in Central America; the Egyptians also used it, in their pyramids. An early example of its use in this country are the foundations of Salisbury Cathedral, which were laid seven hundred years ago.

Early experiments were carried out rather by trial and error, the various ingredients—sand, lime, gravel, and, later, cement—being mixed in haphazard fashion. A French recipe of 1568, by Philibert de l'Orme, runs: 'Having thrown in a layer of concrete, half-a-foot thick, large single stones may also be thrown in and mixed here and there but without touching each other; after this, throw in more concrete and repeat the process until the excavation is full.'

To-day the different materials are measured with extreme accuracy, and reinforced concrete has proved itself to be the toughest of building materials. One of its greatest advantages is adaptability. Bridges, aqueducts, dams, docks, hospitals, and churches find places in the long list of concrete erections. Rheims Cathedral was extensively repaired with it after being badly damaged by gunfire during the First World War. In Vancouver, Canada, St James's Church is built entirely of concrete. Though not very large, it is a good example of how modern building materials can be wedded to traditional Gothic lines.

The new Waterloo Bridge over the Thames also shows how this 'artificial rock' can be moulded into graceful work. Tasmania, too, can boast of a fine concrete bridge, over the river Derwent. This is unique, for it consists of a string of twenty-four pontoons, each 132 feet long and 12 feet deep, joined rigidly together to form a single buoyant structure, 3168 feet long, supporting a 30-foot roadway. In all, the bridge contains 12,000 tons of ferro-concrete.

In recent years more and more use has been made of quick-hardening types of concrete. Lamp-posts and railway sleepers are two familiar things produced from them. Piles composed of quick-hardening concrete can be driven into the ground within twenty-four hours of moulding, and with blows that would smash any made of wood. These high-alumina concretes, as they are called, are also favoured for quick jobs, like the relining of furnaces, when the plant has to be working again as soon as possible. In the case of

furnaces they are used to keep the firebricks in place, and special kinds have been developed to take the place of these bricks. This means they have to stand temperatures of 1600 degrees centigrade, sixteen times that of boiling water, without showing any signs of disintegrating.

This fire-resisting quality is one of the chief assets of reinforced concrete. It does not crumble like some limestones and, being a bad conductor of heat, the reinforcing steel-work inside it never gets hot enough to buckle. When used in vast quantities the concrete itself creates considerable heat, which prevents it from hardening. To overcome this in solid structures, like dams, the thing is built up in sections, often with an air-space between each section to assist cooling. The 5,000,000 tons of the Boulder Dam had to be water-cooled by a large refrigeration plant. When the massive sections had hardened, the spaces were filled with concrete grouting.

Many tunnels contain large quantities of this grouting, sometimes as the lining itself, but, more often, as a reinforcement of the steel segments which form the outer shell of most of the sections. Concrete grouting is also used in tunnels, for stopping leaks during excavation. This method was applied to the Mersey Tunnel, and the roadway itself is supported by two continuous concrete walls which are shaped near the fan shafts to assist the circulation of ventilating air. The double-deck tunnel through Goat Island, U.S.A., which links the two bridges connecting San Francisco with Oakland, had its lining of reinforced concrete constructed before the core of solid rock was dug out.

**T**HE necessity for shuttering when moulding concrete is a drawback. This is far outweighed, however, by the cheapness, strength, and adaptability of concrete. An increasing number of things are being made from units prefabricated in a factory. Many types of house, and even bridges, can now be assembled from ready-made slabs and posts.

Greater use is also being made of concrete on farms, for it is more hygienic than wood and iron. The germs of animal diseases love to hide in the old woodwork of stalls and sties, but they get little opportunity of doing this on a smooth concrete surface. The pressing need for more food, which may well eclipse most of our other problems, has spurred on

huge irrigation and hydroelectric schemes in many parts of the world, including India, Africa, and Australia. Dozens of dams will have to be constructed, involving millions of tons of reinforced concrete, before vast areas become fertile and food-producing.

How long will our concrete structures last? There are sea-walls in Italy, built by the Romans, and still in existence after centuries of pounding by the sea. If this is anything to go by, five hundred years would appear to be a conservative estimate for the more solid ones.

A new service for concrete is in connection

with atomic piles, where it is used to protect the scientists from the harmful rays. The latest large building to employ reinforced concrete is London's new Festival of Britain concert-hall, in which the roof, walls, and floor are made of two thicknesses. The main auditorium, seating over 3000 people, is surrounded by an envelope of smaller rooms, including restaurants, a smaller hall, and an exhibition gallery, all of which serve greatly to increase the soundproofing of the central hall. The hall as a whole is a memorable addition to British architecture and structural engineering—another miracle of concrete.

## A Baltic Capri

### *Denmark's Christian's Isle*

MADELEINE KENT

FROM Bornholm, Christian's Isle is a mere streak of white foam on the northern horizon—a streak with a funny round blob set crookedly at one end of it, as though a child had made a mud-pie in the middle of the Baltic.

I had heard of the island vaguely before I left Copenhagen. To my friend Karen it was 'the other island which people say is even more wonderful than Bornholm,' but which she had twice failed to reach herself, because the sea was too rough and the motor-boat had to turn back. That would probably have been my own fate had I *tried* to go there, for in that stormy area, where there are never two days alike, the 'weather permitting' clause plays havoc with planned excursions. Actually, however, I went to Christian's Isle by mistake, believing that the boat I boarded at the foot of the Helligdommen cliffs was only going for the short run along the coast which I had seen it making on other mornings. 'No, no,' cried the boatman, gleefully pointing out to sea like

a magician waving his wand. 'Good day for Christian's Isle. All-day trip. Back at five o'clock.'

A good day it certainly was, one of those days when the Baltic is a deep, cornflower blue. Even so, the wind and the spray increased so much towards the end of the two-hours' run that we passengers had to lie prone, covered—if we had them—with macintoshes. When I did at length raise my head, I no more than thought I must be dreaming. For, there, a couple of hundred yards away, floated Christian's Isle, and lo! it was not one isle, but three. Two of them lay lovingly side by side, their arms outstretched towards each other. Behind them, a baby islet slept in the sunshine, naked of everything but its own golden hue.

As we glided between those arm-like breakwaters into the natural harbour formed by the long, narrow strip of still water between the two main islands, I could see why all three shone as though made of gold. Not only



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were the rocks a bright saffron yellow; they were also encrusted with myriads of tiny limpet-shells glittering in the sunshine. Later I learned that all three islands are of solid rock, and that originally there was not a scrap of soil on any of them. There still is none on the uninhabited islet, but in the course of the last few centuries boatload after boatload of Bornholm soil has been brought to the two other islands, and, wherever there are a few inches of it, flowers, ferns, and even trees grow with extraordinary luxuriance.

Between Christian's Isle proper and its neighbour (inevitably called Frederick's Isle, since the Danish kings have to alternate between those two names) there is a light suspension-bridge, which I crossed in order to have a look at the 'mud-pie'—actually an ancient and quaintly crooked round-tower, formerly a fort and now the island museum. This, and a lighthouse, and a few rows of fishermen's cottages comprise the sights of Frederick's Isle, but from the tower one sees that Christian's Isle, with its steep, cobblestoned lanes rising to the hill in the centre of its few acres, has everything to make it a world in miniature.

There is a partially-ruined, but quite sizable, castle, to which would-be Danish reformers used to be banished. There is one perfect street of the little yellow stucco 18th-century houses found in the old quarters of most Danish cities. There are tiny cottages nearly buried in roses, and a half-timbered inn, in whose walled garden I was presently drinking coffee beneath a laden fig-tree. There is a small white church, the interior of which is painted in such clear bright colours that it seems as though it must belong to the Mediterranean. But the cemetery, a hundred yards away on the summit of the island, is wholly northern. Standing there among the lichened gravestones, with an unobstructed view of the sea in every direction, I drank in such fragrance as is unknown save in the moist air of the north—the fragrance of thyme and also of the box borders around each of the graves.

Tearing myself away reluctantly from this truly heavenly spot, I made for the sea-wall running right round the northern half of the

island. From here one could look down on tiny coves where the water lay so still within the shelter of the golden rocks that the phrase 'safe in harbour' leapt to the mind. And harbours they were to the hundreds of tired birds that were resting there after their long flight across the sea.

WE left Christian's Isle in style. We had come in alone, but we departed as a flotilla, the Neksö mail-boat leading. And as we passed between the breakwaters, white-matched old women, who had clambered out on the golden rocks with their grandchildren, held the babies up to wave good-bye. The boats from Bornholm were, I supposed, the one great excitement in the day to day round of their lives.

'Don't you believe it,' said the Bornholm Medical Officer, to whose house I was invited a few days later. 'They live, those people, for parties. Parties that go on, not merely all night, but sometimes for several days. It is a lawless life they lead on Christian's Isle—often not getting up till midday, paying no taxes...'

'No taxes!' I exclaimed. Instantly I was full of questions, which the doctor grinningly stemmed by dismissing the three hundred inhabitants of Christian's Isle as either illiterate fisherfolk, or cranks and misfits, who could not face up to real life.

'Tell about the cow,' urged his more tolerant wife.

'Oh, yes, that was funny. A year or so ago they thought what a good idea it would be to have fresh milk for the children, so they imported a cow. But, as there is no grass on Christian's Isle, except in the pastor's garden, the mail-boat had to bring fodder for the cow from Neksö every day. That worked all right in the summer months. But then came the autumn storms, and for three weeks the islanders were cut off from Bornholm. When at last the mail-boat arrived, the emaciated cow had to be lifted on board and taken back to Neksö to recover. You can't have everything, you see, if you cut yourself off from the world!'

'Yes, I see,' I murmured meekly.

# The Sinking of the 'Lancastria'

H. DRUMMOND GAULD, F.R.S.G.S., F.S.A.Scot.

*In the story of the British withdrawal from France in the early summer of 1940 during the Second World War St Nazaire has been overshadowed by Dunkirk, yet from this French Atlantic port important elements of the British Expeditionary Force were evacuated, and here, during the operations, as vividly described below, the transport 'Lancastria' was sunk on 17th June with the loss of some 4000 lives.*

AS I went down the gangway on to the tender I looked back down the long breakwater of St Nazaire and a surge of pity flooded my heart as I saw the serried lines of troops slowly moving forward to the embarkation point. So the gallant little British army had been driven back to the sea and we were going home to Blighty. We had not expected this reverse to our arms, but we had not been defeated on the field of honour and every man knew in his inner self that we would yet win the day.

The ropes were cast off, the engine-room telegraph clanged, and we slowly edged away from France to make room for other tenders that came nosing in astern. We steamed out to sea for perhaps an hour, passing all the vessels I had seen from La Baule. It became apparent that our tender was heading for a large vessel that lay the farthest out of any, her towering sides high above the water and her rows of portholes proclaiming her a liner. Slowly we approached the big ship, the bridge-telegraph ringing as we slipped alongside and made fast. Gangways were run out through doorways in the vessel's side and the troops filed steadily aboard. There were lifebelts here and there, and from them I learned that I stood aboard s.s. 'Lancastria,' a vessel of 18,000 tons burden.

I was assigned to a cabin on A deck, a fortunate circumstance for me, as it was situated immediately below the boat-deck, to which access was readily available. The master-at-arms had my cabin-trunk and valise deposited in the Armoury, and after divesting

myself of my equipment I was at leisure to relax. I ascended to the boat-deck. The coast of France was faintly discernible across a wide expanse of sea, so far out did the liner lie. The sun now shone warmly, and I watched the troops pouring aboard 'Lancastria' from all manner of craft, from graceful destroyers and fussy tug-boats. All forenoon they ascended the gangways into the bowels of the ship, till it was scarcely possible to move about the overcrowded decks. I stood for a time beside the open steel door in the towering wall of the liner through which troops were coming aboard. One or two of the ship's officers stood there, and to them their captain put the question: 'How many men have we aboard?' 'About 6000, sir,' was the reply. This appeared to upset the Captain, who departed quickly on an urgent mission.

Later, as I stood by the rail, a destroyer came alongside and I saw my Sub-Area H.Q. Staff, from whom I had been severed since leaving Dieppe, come aboard, bringing with them many official boxes which presumably contained the records. And now no more troops came aboard 'Lancastria,' and the heavy doors were closed. Still no attempt was made to get under way and we swung idly at anchor. This surprised me, as I felt that the sooner we got away from these waters the better. By this time I had reached the after-deck and was watching with interest another large liner, 'Orontes,' slide past our stern, packed with troops and followed by one or two small vessels equally crowded. The sun was now high and the water scintillating.

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**S**UDDENLY I heard the noise of aircraft, and a great black shape hurtled screaming directly overhead. Someone shouted: 'Jerry! Look out!' I attributed this to the feeble wit of the comic who is always with us. The plane made straight for 'Orontes,' and I thought the pilot a crazy sort of fellow thus to amuse himself and us when mightier tasks awaited him. Then, gracious heavens, there was a blinding, red flash, the shattering roar of an explosion, and 'Orontes' was enveloped in a black pall of smoke. That left no doubt as to the identity of the plane. Slowly the smoke drifted away and slowly 'Orontes' emerged from that shroud of death. Had she been hit? No, it seemed not—a miss, a very near miss, but there must be casualties. One of the destroyers that had been ferrying troops from St Nazaire to 'Lancastria' cruised round 'Orontes,' her morse winking in the sunlight, and two fighter aeroplanes, French, I think, swept round the laden vessel and then departed shorewards.

'Mark you, friend,' I said to one of 'Lancastria's' crew who stood near me, 'it will be our turn next.' So we waited in suspense, fully expecting a renewed heavy attack, but nothing happened, and in about half-an-hour 'Lancastria's' bugles sounded 'All clear.' The order was now passed round: 'Everybody down below.' I did not choose to obey this random command as I deemed it a stupid one, in the event of the ship being torpedoed or bombed. I felt it strange that the enemy had not renewed the attack, but as time passed, and nothing dramatic occurred, I fancied that perhaps, as we had been put on the alert, the danger had been warded off.

In this frame of mind, and feeling tired after so many sleepless nights, I went to my cabin on A deck, hoping to have a nap, but found that I could have no access to the bunks for masses of equipment and that the floor was similarly encumbered. There were, it seemed, seven officers in this little cabin designed for four persons. There was, however, an empty armchair, and I subsided into it and was on the point of dozing, when a medical officer I had known in Dieppe entered the cabin. This woke me, and we were exchanging reminiscences when the most appalling crash made the great vessel shudder. The first bombs had hit us. We were a sitting target without protection and with over 6000 men on board. If a concentrated attack were made on the ship, nothing could save her, and the disaster

would be the greatest that had so far happened at sea.

All this flashed in an instant through my mind as I stared speechless at the doctor, who stood rigidly framed in the doorway. Tense in my chair, gripping the stout wooden arms, I gazed, fascinated, at the top of the cabin door. It was no longer horizontal, but at an angle, an angle that was slowly, stealthily increasing every moment, and there was at the same time an unusual motion, barely perceptible, that no ship in a healthy state ever displays. 'Doctor,' I said, and I knew there was no shadow of doubt about it, 'she's sinking.'

**S**CARCELY had I spoken, when the dull roar of another explosion shook the great ship. In a moment or two, and audible above the general din because of its close proximity, was heard a bumping and scraping of boots outside in the passage, and a small party carrying a man staggered into the cabin. 'Lay him down on the floor,' said the doctor. At first I thought the man was wounded, but then I saw that it was not so, and that he had simply fainted. I could not now leave the cabin even if I wished to do so, and I felt trapped in this great sinking coffin-ship. I could hear the vessel's machine-gun in action again, and that could signify only one thing. Still the doctor knelt in the doorway by his patient.

Just as the next salvo hit 'Lancastria' I observed that the man on the floor recovered consciousness, and in a few minutes was on his feet, and gone. I still watched the angle of the cabin door. Yes! the sliding, stealthy motion had stopped. The angle was decreasing. 'Lancastria' was recovering an even keel. Had the brave old Atlantic greyhound determined to survive? The cabin door stood straight now, straight up and down as a cabin door should be. Bravo, 'Lancastria'! Perhaps she would float for some hours yet—long enough to find some haven where her survivors could be put ashore.

But now—but now—dreadful, dreadful to behold, there is another angle on the dark frame of the doorway, to port this time and rapidly increasing, so rapidly now that there was no time to be lost in seeking reasonable and honourable means of preserving one's life. On leaving the cabin I found the passage-way full of fumes and the smell of explosives, but several portholes had been smashed, and

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through these the smoke was pouring as through funnels. What was more disquieting was the spectacle I glimpsed as I passed along—lifeboats full of men pulling away from the doomed ship and the whole surface of the sea thick with bobbing heads. That the ship was doomed there was now no possible doubt.

The lifebelt lockers were already quite empty, and I could not swim. The stairway to the boat-deck was not congested and I emerged on to the boat-deck without difficulty. What a grim sight met my eyes. 'Lancastria' was already well down by the head and over to port at a rapidly steepening angle. All undamaged lifeboats were away, the loose ropes from the davits hanging in a tangled jumble along the ship's side. The starboard side of 'Lancastria' was now an immense height above the water owing to the heavy list to port. As I looked over this cliff of steel I saw almost below me a smashed and water-logged lifeboat still hanging from her davit tackle and containing several men. Others were clinging to her gunwales, but she was too obviously useless, and would have sunk had they ventured to cast her off.

Oddly enough, though I felt that my last moments on this mundane sphere were approaching—I could not swim and had no means of leaving the doomed ship—I experienced no feeling of panic or despair. Even now I entertained a faint hope that the ship might not sink, that some buoyancy might yet sustain her till rescue came. I felt curiously detached in my thoughts, so much so that I failed to notice a lifebelt, one of the circular type, hanging in its wonted position on the rail before me. My attention was drawn to it by the movements of a man who was hovering about in my vicinity. I gathered that he had seen the lifebelt and wanted to possess himself of it, but was deterred by my presence. At length he came forward, looked at me, and without a word took the lifebelt from its supports and went his way.

**W**HAT was now to be done? The fo'c'sle-head was disappearing under the waves, and the angle of the deck had become so acute that, with the suddenness of an avalanche, all the kit-bags, rifles, packs, and equipments that lay abandoned upon the decks slid helter-skelter into the sea. I could preserve a footing only by clutching the rail. Looking around, I could not see that any of 'Lancastria's' life-

boats were returning to pick up survivors, nor did the destroyers and tenders that had helped to put the troops aboard our ship stand in to pull men out of the sea. They lay off some hundreds of yards, and later in the day I lost sight of them. No succour that I could see was attempted by any of the other merchant-vessels that lay off St Nazaire. I may be mistaken, but I saw no immediate endeavour to give us aid.

I glanced up at 'Lancastria's' bridge and saw in a corner of it one of her officers gazing down into the water. In a moment he had divested himself of cap and coat, leaped to the rail, and dived into the sea. 'Lancastria's' head was now completely under, and the angle of the deck became so steep that nothing movable could remain upon it. I had perforce to climb over the rail on to the ship's side. As the waves lapped closer to my feet I walked slowly up this great platform, broad as a highroad, towards the stern, high in air, where hundreds of men were assembled. At one point the plates were hot beneath my feet and I passed into a belt of atmosphere which smelt of fire and red-hot metal. I presumed that I was over the stokehold and boilers, and shuddered when I thought of the men who might be trapped down in that scalding inferno. I congratulated myself on having declined to observe the order to go below, and told myself that there must be hundreds of men drowning in the bowels of the ship who had been unable to reach the decks because of smashed stairways and collapsed bulkheads. What a death in those narrow confines as the ship heeled slowly over, as the lights went out, and the water crept higher and higher in the cabins, passages, and alleyways over the trapped and struggling masses of humanity.

Death is not pleasant to contemplate anywhere, but I felt that it was better to meet him out in the open, where I was free to struggle with him to the end. As an old soldier, I have seen the gruesome monster in many narrow places and felt his breath clammy upon my brow, but I had always swept him aside—till now. As I walked up 'Lancastria's' starboard side I had a distinct vision of my own city of Edinburgh and of Princes Street this sunny summer afternoon. I saw the lofty clock-tower of the East End Station Hotel, the gardens aglow with flowers, the grey old castle on its mossy, lichen-decked rock, the shops, the gay crowds passing to and fro. Why this extraordinary vision should suddenly appear before me, trembling in air between

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sky and sea, I do not pretend to understand, but there it was, mocking me for being in such a fantastic predicament, mocking me who might so easily have stayed safely at home, mocking me for concerning myself with a war that, but for a set of fools and knaves, need never have occurred, and so I saw also once again Old Man Death, standing there with that terrible scythe of his and grinning at me with his skeleton face. He and I were old friends, and our recognition was mutual. I had seen him, and he me, so often in *l'autre guerre*—on the Somme, at Martinpuich, Prue Trench, Death Valley, Maxwell Support, Butte de Warlencourt, at Loos, Arras, Crow's Nest Sap, Barbed Wire Square, Monchy-le-Preux, at Ypres, Passchendaele, Soissons, Château-Thierry—and now here was the old rogue once more, mixing freely and quite at home among the men of doomed 'Lancastria.'

Suddenly 'Lancastria' went down beneath me, and I was in the maelstrom of swirling waters going down, down, down in the suction into the depths. This must be the end of the life I had known up above in the brave old sunny world. They would weep for me at home, and all others would care nothing, forgetting me almost at once. Down, down, down, darker, ever darker, the hissing waters drumming in my ears. At home in the sunny countryside all the green fields were smiling in the peace of a summer day, the hills majestic and serene, the burns rippling merrily down the glens. Even here, off St Nazaire, the sun was ashine, the waters blue and scintillating, but the splashing waves were drowning and engulfing a multitude of men, and it didn't seem to matter very much.

**H**OW long I struggled below the surface of the sea, and how far down the sinking vessel drew me, I have no knowledge, but I eventually reached the surface, to find myself in the midst of floating debris, drowning men, and a foul surging welter of black oil, the life-blood of 'Lancastria,' deceased. All this crowded drama, from the launching of the first bomb or torpedo to the final plunge of the stricken ship, had occupied less than twenty minutes.

I was able to keep myself afloat by scrambling about among a mass of kit-bags and packs, but I knew that those would quickly become waterlogged and sink. The situation seemed hopeless. This undignified scramble

for life went on for some time, and I was feeling myself to be more of a damned fool than ever. Then I espied at a little distance what I fancied to be an overturned lifeboat, to which three or four men were clinging. This was indeed fortunate, as nothing else that I could see around me could possibly prevent me from drowning. I could not have reached this raft, for such it proved to be, but for the mass of small debris that floated around and for the ocean current that drifted me towards it. I reached it, and grasped it with profound thankfulness, but found that I had no longer sufficient strength to hoist myself out of the water. There was, however, a lifeline looped round the side of the raft and I wound my left arm through one of these loops, hoping that, in the event of my becoming completely exhausted and unable to retain my hold, I might thus be prevented from sinking.

The buoyancy of the sea and of the thick glutinous layer of oil that covered its surface enabled me to float easily and to grasp with my right hand the corrugations of the raft or float. I was steeped head over ears in filthy crude oil, and, the seas washing over me every few seconds, I was stained so black from crown to heel as to resemble a large piece of half-burnt cork or timber.

I tried desperately hard to get aboard the raft, but my state of exhaustion precluded this; and the two or three men already upon it were fully absorbed in their own distresses. At one point I succeeded in getting my chest hoisted upon the float, and so clung there, but other men who were now clambering aboard forced me off unintentionally and I found myself back in the sea—where, as an officer, I deemed it my obligation to remain—hanging by the left arm to the lifeline and so completely under the oily waves that I was only able at times to keep my face free to breathe. My horizon was necessarily very limited, but on looking around as best I could through my oil-clogged eyes I could see no signs of rescue. Even the two destroyers and tenders that had piled the troops into 'Lancastria' had sheered off. If they were near—and they might have been near—they were certainly not within my range of vision. Some little time before 'Lancastria' made her plunge into the depths, and while I still lingered aboard her, I noticed that one of the destroyers was firing out to sea. This had set me wondering, and I asked myself whether, in addition to the bombs that had disembowelled 'Lancastria,' torpedoes



## THE SINKING OF THE 'LANCASTRIA'

from a lurking submarine had also helped to destroy the ship, and had even attacked and sunk the destroyers themselves, whence, perhaps, the apparent absence of any attempt by the destroyers to close in and rescue survivors.

There were many men in the water around me, some in lifebelts, some clinging to wreckage. It was inevitable that some of them would drown sooner or later. The complete absence of panic, however, had all along been so pronounced that I was not greatly surprised to hear the swelling, devil-may-care chorus of 'Roll Out the Barrel' floating across that terrible scene of destruction and death. It was a gallant gesture in face of a rather hopeless situation. There were other cries, too, from time to time as the hours crept on—the last gurgling wail of the drowning and the frantic calls of a woman (one of a small party of refugees, presumably, who had been aboard) that arose ever and anon: 'Oh, keep me up! I cannot swim! I cannot swim!' I could not see her, but she must have been near.

IT was now evening and my state was worsening so much that my hold on the raft was relaxing and I doubted if I could keep afloat much longer. Moreover, the sea was rising and my head was more often under water than above it, the raft rocketing about and increasing my difficulties. At length my state of exhaustion increased so much that I told the man nearest to me up on the raft that I feared I could hold on no longer and must soon yield myself to the sea. 'You must not do that,' he replied. 'Then catch me by my shoulder-strap,' I returned, 'and so help me to hang on.'

We remained in this plight till late evening, when a shout went up that boats were coming in our direction. I could not see them, and as time passed and my exhaustion continued I began to fear that someone was merely trying to sustain our flagging spirits. Then, it seemed, I partially lost consciousness, and when I recovered, there, about a hundred yards away, was a small French fishing-lugger, the crew of which were working like Trojans pulling men out of the sea. Ropes were hanging over her sides and by their aid troops were climbing to safety. The little ship drifted slowly towards us. Again I became faint, and again I strove to rally.

Now the gallant little rescue-ship was almost alongside the raft and more ropes were flung

down for the men to grasp. So anxious were my comrades on the raft to board the little Frenchman that they gave no further thought to me in the water but stood up on the raft the better to jump over the high gunwale of the fishing-vessel. The wash of the sea and the jumping of the men threw the raft away from the ship's side and, in my weakened condition, I lost hold of the lifeline to which I had clung so long and was washed under the hull of the vessel. So, I told myself, you are to perish after all within an ace of being saved. My head was thumping all the while against the ship's side, and I felt it well-nigh useless to strive any longer. I remember glancing upwards as I sank into unconsciousness and seeing a rope dangling close to my hand. I grasped it in a last despairing effort, but was horrified to find that it was so impregnated with oil that my hand slid from it. 'A moi!' I shouted feebly, 'A moi!' Then I surrendered to what seemed inevitable, and sank into oblivion. An iron grip closed round me, huge hands snatched me from the watery pit and pulled me in a herculean swing over the Frenchman's side—to safety.

I lay on the deck half-dead, quite insensible to all around me, fighting for breath as if my lungs would burst. I could not breathe properly and felt that I could not long survive my rescue. The saturated, oil-drenched uniform clung to my shivering body so horribly that I strove to rid myself of the tunic, and recklessly cast it away, careless of the fact that it contained my wallet, papers, keys, and gold watch and chain. All this while I remained in a state of stupor, entirely unconscious of what was happening around me. Time passed and my condition slowly improved, at least I was able vaguely to comprehend my surroundings. I looked along the deck of the lugger, and through the wheelhouse window saw the skipper regarding me intently, his expression whimsical, half-serious, half-amused. I must certainly have been a strange spectacle.

Then all at once I stared stupefied through semi-conscious, oil-clogged eyes. It was unbelievable. Was this a vision, conjured forth by magician's wand or by my disordered imagination? Was this a Flying Dutchman, a spectral ship, 'Lancastria's' ghost? A large steamer stood alongside the little fishing-lugger. Amazed, I stared up its lofty side to its tall funnel and airy bridge, and at the strange faces along its crowded rail. The

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survivors from the lugger were ascending a long stairway to the steamer's deck. But I could not move; I had no further interest in endeavouring to preserve myself.

Opposite me, to my further astonishment, stood a large stout woman waiting to ascend the ladder. She was half-naked, her breasts bare and thick with crude oil. Was this the woman, I wondered, who had cried so dolefully in the water? All the survivors who had been rescued by the fishing-boat were by this time ascending the ladder to the steamer, and it seemed that I was expected to follow suit. Well, up I climbed, laboriously, kind hands helping me over 'Cymbula's' side. That was her name, 'Cymbula' of London, a big tanker that had appeared suddenly out of the void to take us over from the fishing-vessel. 'Good-bye, little Frenchman! Long live France!'

NIGHT was closing down now over the sea, over the grave of 'Lancastria.' I was still in the grip of a stupor and could pay little attention to what was happening around me, but I was aware that there were Chinese on board 'Cymbula,' who with kind hands stripped the stinking reeking uniform from my shivering frame, wrapped a warm blanket around me, and led me off to the 'Infirmary' in the stern of the ship. This was established in the saloon, and was now full of men in various stages of sickness and infirmity. The tables, settees, cushions, carpets were already foul with oil, and I trembled to think of the ultimate condition of the saloon's comfortable appointments. Men, little better than corpses, were stretched upon the floor and tables, and an R.A.M.C. doctor, who seemed to have been conjured forth from the void like so many things on that eventful day, tended us all and administered medicines.

'Cymbula's' engines were now throbbing at full speed and we were plunging through the darkness for an English port. I was too unwell all night to care much about our destination, but I was much better next morning and gladly followed the Medical Officer's advice that all men who felt well enough should go on deck. I stepped out of the infirmary and wandered along the alleyway to where the morning sunshine shone blithely on the deck. It was pleasantly warm, and the blanket which I wore wrapped round me in default of clothes was sufficient covering. Many of the rescued men were sitting in the sunshine swopping yarns. The officers and crew of the ship without exception could not have been kinder to us. Tasty and satisfying meals were dispensed to us throughout the day, and the officers had ever a cheery word for us all, telling us from time to time how many miles we were from Plymouth, for thither we were bound.

The day continued sunny and warm, and it was pleasant to lie on the broad deck. But all day long I scanned the sky and strove to pick up above the steady throb of the engines the scream of a dive-bombing plane. The submarine menace was less acute.

Towards evening there could be seen far to the north-east a tiny speck shining white against the blue sea—Eddystone at last. It was now that, looking over the stern of the ship to the foaming wake, I observed that we were approaching the English coast in a zigzag course. Slowly Eddystone grew larger, slowly drew abeam, slowly faded astern into the gathering dusk. So we steamed up Plymouth Hoe at set of sun and, as the anchor-chain went clattering through the hawse and the bridge-telegraph clanged 'Finished with Engines,' our hearts were wae for 'Lancastria' and for many brave lads who would come home no more.

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### Dawn

*Day dawns, and all the grief my heart has held  
Through the lone night to smiles has given place;  
The anguished tears that to my hot cheek welled  
Have vanished now and leave no bitter trace.  
The shining sun has lit, with golden tips,  
The purple shadows of a deep despair;  
And far across the sea my questing ships  
Fare forth, to find, who knows, what treasure rare.*

J. C. SKERRATT.

# Prince of Poyais

## *Sir Gregor Macgregor and his Exploits*

A. NIVEN ROBERTSON

IN the year 1811 an extraordinary Highlander, by name Sir Gregor Macgregor, went to Caracas, in Venezuela. He joined Bolivar in the war for South American independence, and he attained such honour in battle that the Venezuelans included his name amongst those distinguished as the 'Liberators.'

Seven years later Sir Gregor was the leader of what may be called a second Darien expedition. He received support for his enterprise from London and Glasgow merchants, and he set out with three ships, the *Onyx*, the *Peterburgh*, and the *Monarch*. Aux Cayes, on Haiti, in the West Indies, was the rendezvous of the venture. The three ships, carrying sealed instructions of Sir Gregor, proceeded to the island of Saint Andrew, 125 miles or so off the east coast of Nicaragua. Sir Gregor himself arrived later and took possession of the island in the name of the Government of New Granada, and there he hoisted the flag of New Granada.

Macgregor's troops then attacked Puerto Bello, in Panama, but the Spanish opposed the invasion. The 'General,' Sir Gregor, stood on the quarter-deck of his ship directing the gunfire, while he held a telescope to his eye in a Nelsonic attitude. A musket-ball just missed his head. Puerto Bello was finally taken, and Macgregor's flag, white with a black saltired cross, was hoisted, while one of the forts captured was baptised Fort Macgregor. Sir Gregor, elated with success, produced a flamboyant bulletin: 'The First Division of the Army of New Granada has covered itself with glory.' *Te Deum* and *High Mass* were sung in the church for victory, and in the presence of the Spanish Governor.

Sir Gregor, with one Colonel Rafter, then

reconnoitred the vicinity, and found no trace of the enemy, but Macgregor was again lucky when he entered an apparently empty hut where six Spaniards, who could easily have captured him, were in hiding. So far so good. The victory seemed complete.

Then all went wrong. The troops were drunk every night, went with the native women, and sold their arms for more drink. The Spanish attacked, killed many officers and men of Macgregor's army, and regained the forts, but Sir Gregor, surprised in his bed, escaped by leaping from a balcony and swimming to a ship in the bay. Colonel Rafter remained, and tried to rally his men, and sent a Lieutenant Nelson with a message to Macgregor on board the ship. Sir Gregor's only reply was a complaint of a sore shoulder, due to his leap, but, possibly realising that this was not a very noble response, he gave a note to Nelson later: 'I am about exhausted after swimming to the ship. Defend to the last. Spike the guns. Beware treachery.' And he stated that he would be on shore in an hour, but his promise was not kept.

What was regarded as a truce with honour was signed with the Spaniards. A Spaniard took a copy to Macgregor, who again behaved in his exalted manner, tearing up the truce, and ordering the Spaniard over the ship's side.

The final tragic end of this adventure of the 'great' Macgregor was that his officers and men suffered terrible agonies when marched as prisoners through endless tropical forests and over many high mountains and across many streams, being soaked to the skin by rain and badly fed, to end up in prison in Panama City, where they were ignominiously paraded through the streets gay with bunting in honour of the Spanish

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victory. Many tried to escape and were shot, others died from disease, and only one hundred and twenty out of three hundred and forty of Sir Gregor's army survived, to be freed as a result of a change of government in Spain.

Dr Weatherhead, a survivor, wrote in 1821 a vivid account of the expedition, in which he does not condemn Sir Gregor, but admits that he possibly had excess of vanity or ambition. The Doctor considered some of Macgregor's actions were foolish, such as purchasing muskets without locks, and selling them for lead to buy more useless muskets!

THE character of Sir Gregor was such, however, that this disastrous venture did not prevent him from indulging in a second enterprise, known as the Poyais Expedition, to a territory on the Mosquito Shore, in northern Honduras, along the Black River, south of Cape Cameron, which he had obtained from the Poyais Indians. He started the expedition on its eventful way by an announcement in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 11th May 1822: 'Baronial Estate for sale in the Territory of Poyais, in the Bay of Honduras.'

The land was for sale at two shillings an acre, and to be applied for at the Poyais Land Office, 12 Royal Exchange, Edinburgh. For some weeks similar sales of land were advertised, and each notice cunningly announced an early rise in price, in order to rush people into purchasing. The advertisements were accompanied by such statements as: 'Climate salubrious'; 'Europeans retain their health to a good old age'; 'Mosquitoes and sand-flies scarce'; 'Land agents at Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Hamburg, and Inverness.'

Then the expedition started. The *Honduras Packet* sailed from London on 10th December 1822 for the Black River, Poyais, with fifty emigrants, most of whom had come from Leith in smacks. There was a surgeon on board, and there were provisions for six months. The vessel arrived at Poyais in February. The *Kinnersley Castle* sailed from Leith in January 1823, with two hundred emigrants, mostly poor Scots who had saved £15 to £30. It reached Poyais in March. The 'superior first-class vessel, coppered and copper-fastened,' the *Skeen* of Leith, arrived at Poyais a few months after the *Kinnersley Castle*. A new ship *Skeen* was for sale at the

Star Inn, Perth, in August 1826. This ship was built by Laurence Skeen of Leith, so probably it was he who built the ship *Skeen* that went to Poyais.

Such was the start of this great adventure. It was a great adventure to those poor Scottish people. We can imagine the sad farewells at the pier of Leith, and the excitement and joyous hopes aroused in the hearts of those who thought that they were escaping from the penury and unemployment then existing, and that they were off to the promised land.

Very soon after the ships had reached Poyais, rumours came back that all was not well with the settlement there. A letter appeared in the *London Courier* stating that six 'deluded creatures' had arrived at Belize, the capital of British Honduras, saying that nine survived out of fifty-five who had landed at Poyais, and that the others were lost at sea, or had died in mangrove swamps after exposure in an open boat. Another ship's load was being searched for by General Codd. This report turned out to be false.

Optimistic letters, on the other hand, were also received. One settler wrote: 'My opinion is that a man can do well here if he wills. It is a healthy country back in, and I wish that I had my family with me. Only one accident has occurred, when a canoe overturned and one man was drowned. Ten young men and one woman deserted to Belize, and I consider they acted improperly. There are two hundred and twenty people at St Joseph, Poyais.' St Joseph, at the mouth of the Black River, was the seaport of the settlement.

Another emigrant stated that the country was one continuous forest, with hordes of natives who were harmless creatures and exchanged bananas and plantains for old shirts and old hats, and were fond of red colours. He said nothing derogatory of Poyais.

The misfortunes of the settlers were soon reported to the authorities at Belize. One hundred and five persons had arrived there, who expressed in piteous terms the deceits of Sir Gregor and his agents. At St Joseph they had found instead of a settlement only a few wretched huts, and no stores or water.

The Belize magistrates decided to settle the hapless people at Stann Creek, British Honduras, where there was good land and good water, where the site was open to easterly breezes, and 'near enough Belize for the

## PRINCE OF POYAIS

refugees to market there, but far enough away to prevent them coming there on every frivolous occasion.' So fifty were settled at Stann Creek, and their leader was to be Manager with £100 for the first year, as salary, and a house to be called Government House. Unfortunately these efforts of assistance were frustrated by lack of industrious habits among the settlers and by interference from Macgregor's agents. Lord Bathurst of the Colonial Office, London, sent a message of thanks to the authorities at Belize, which was accompanied by a word of approval from the King.

Meanwhile Sir Gregor had dubbed himself as his Serene Highness Prince of Poyais, Cacique of the Poyais Nation, and Defender of the Rights of the Indian Tribes, and had raised a 'Poyaisian Army,' whose Adjutant-General, Colonel Low, arriving at Belize, had refused to produce his authority, but had protested that the magistrates had taken his property as well as Macgregor's. The magistrates replied that Colonel Hall had brought the settlers from Poyais, Mosquito Shore, and that to defray expenses he had seized and sold certain stores, that they themselves, the magistrates, had made no profit, but had paid the passage home of forty-nine refugees, that they had all got fever from them, and that thirty-five of the refugees were in hospital.

CONFLICTING reports were received in the home country. A settler who returned in September 1823 stated that he had land in Poyais, that the merchants of Belize were jealous, that the settlers had ample stores and were all under cover as far as it was possible, and had not landed in a swamp. Labourers had been told beforehand that they might have to live under canvas, but they did not prepare for rain, nor did they attend to their health. A Belize merchant took settlers and paid them high wages. Young men went to Belize with Governor Hall, and they had expected drawing-rooms at St Joseph! Only fifteen had died in Belize Hospital, after eight days' passage there in a burning sun.

A month later, there was a different tale from a native of Edinburgh who had reached Bristol from Poyais. His news was that seventy-six of those who left in the *Kinnersley Castle* had died, and twenty-four of those who sailed in the *Honduras Packet*.

A sad story appeared in the *Edinburgh*

*Evening Courant* of 8th January 1824. According to the account: 'A few days ago a ten years old girl demanded protection at the Police Office, Edinburgh, and stated that she was the daughter of a journeyman printer of the city who had gone with his wife and her in the *Kinnersley Castle* to Poyais, where he died. They had been robbed of everything, even of their clothes, on the passage out. The captain of *The Friends of London* had taken her mother and her on his ship, which was sailing for Britain, but her mother had died of the fever on the passage homewards. The child was landed at an Irish port, where sailors of a Glasgow-bound ship took pity on her, and Captain Robinson, skipper of the vessel, paid for her voyage to Glasgow. A benevolent carrier conveyed her to Edinburgh at his own expense. She was suffering from tertian malaria, got at Poyais.' This pitiful tale is brightened by the record of the kind actions of the seamen and an unknown carrier.

Three orphans were humanely brought home by a Captain Antrim, who took them before the Lord Mayor of London, and the *Morning Herald* reported the proceedings. Sir Gregor brought an action of libel against the paper, and the case was heard by the Court of King's Bench. The libel charged Sir Gregor with fraudulently taking money from emigrants, giving them in exchange drafts on a Poyais bank, which did not exist; also with his false mention of a theatre at Poyais, and 'other matters of delusion.' The Common Serjeant stated the case. 'His client, Sir Gregor Macgregor, had been injured by a report of an examination at which he had not been present to defend himself. He had been dragged before the public, loaded with calumny, and the statement that he had taken money from persons and given drafts to them on a supposed Poyais bank was false and scandalous.' The defendants affirmed that the facts were true and correct.

Various persons who were called as witnesses exposed the follies of Sir Gregor, which caused laughter in court, but at the same time sorrowful accounts of the fate of the settlers were given. The first witness, Irving, calling himself law-agent to his 'Poyaisian Excellency,' said he had never been to Poyais, that Macgregor had given false drafts, and that seventy thousand bank-notes, engraved by Lizars, with Macgregor's coat of arms on them, had been printed in Edinburgh. The



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notes stated: 'One Dollar, Bank of Poyais, St Joseph. On demand or three months' option of the Government of Poyais, one hard dollar will be paid to the bearers at the Bank Office here, By order of His Highness Gregor, Cacique of Poyais.' Irving had sold land, but not over £1000, and had been made a Knight of the Green Cross by Sir Gregor, and to enhance the dignity of his knighthood he was given a dress-coat of green, with buttons adorned by a coronet and the letter 'G' on them!

Andrew Picken, next witness, had gone to Poyais as Under-Secretary at £50 a year. Sir Gregor had asked him to write something in favour of Poyais, as he understood he had a talent for poetry, so he composed 'Lines to Poyais,' and his sister wrote 'The Poyais Emigrant,' which Picken recited to everyone's amusement.

*My bonnie lassie will ye gang  
To yon green land that blooms so cheerie,  
Yon fairy land o' wealth and joy,  
A hame of rest to bless the weary?*

Chorus:

*We'll a' gang to Poyais thegither,  
We'll a' gang o'er the sea thegither,  
To fairer lands and brighter skies,  
Nor sigh again for Hieland heather.*

*Through smiling vales, 'neath lofty hills,  
Through citron-groves, we'll stray thegither.  
Our star o' life will sweetly set,  
When blest wi' wealth and ane anither.*

The fifth verse reads:

*I'll gang wi' you, my bonnie laddie,  
Across the sea, I care na whither,  
In fair Poyais, 'mang joys like these,  
We need na sigh for Hieland heather.*

The last two lines are the response:

*Then come my lassie let's awa',  
For here we will no longer tarry.*

Sir Gregor had ordered this doggerel ballad and another, 'Lines Addressed by a Physician Emigrant to his Mistress,' to be hawked in the streets as propaganda. Picken found no church, no town, but only three huts at the Black River, Poyais. He understood that there were to be three legislative houses at Poyais, that those who bought enough land

were to be Yeomen of the Lower House, and that there were to be barons. Sir Gregor had said there was a gold mine, but he, Picken, had discovered no gold globules in the river.

The next witness was Ann Bagster, who went with her husband and six children to Poyais, but they found no town or land. Her husband and two of her children died of fever, and one hundred and fifty people died of ague.

After the King's Counsel had spoken against Sir Gregor, the Common Serjeant replied that Sir Gregor may have been under a delusion that he could forward a colony, but had committed no offence. Drake and Raleigh had done the same. The Lord Chief Justice decided that there was no proof that Macgregor took money and gave drafts, and the result was one shilling damages for the plaintiff!

So far as Sir Gregor Macgregor is concerned, the story of this expedition of his reads like a tale intended for a comic opera. Was he a swindler, or was he genuinely interested in what he thought might be a successful and patriotic venture to found a colony?

His biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* writes that Sir Gregor was in Poyais in 1821, encouraging trade, establishing schools, projecting a bank, and organising a Poyaisian army, and that he left Poyais for Europe to procure religious instructors and farm implements for the settlement, and that, according to one of Macgregor's proclamations, only honest and industrious persons were to be allowed as Poyaisian subjects. He concludes by saying that 'much and not undeserved obloquy fell on Macgregor, but he probably honestly believed in the feasibility of his schemes.'

The evidence is often contradictory. We recorded that one emigrant considered the climate was healthy up in the hills. A recent authority in an official account of Honduras states the same. There is no agreement in the evidence of the settlers as to the number who succumbed or suffered; but the Belize authorities speak definitely of one hundred and five 'deluded sufferers' whom they relieved, of seventy graves of refugees, and of having spent £4290 in aid.

Strangeways in his *Sketch of the Mosquito Shore, including the Territory of Poyais* (1822), exhibits an engraving of a collection of houses

## PRINCE OF POYAIS

with a central church-tower, at the mouth of the palm-fringed Black River, and there had been mahogany-cutters there before that date, yet some settlers affirmed they found no town or covering, which may have applied to Poyais, one hundred miles up the river, while another emigrant stated that there was plenty cover, and two hundred and twenty persons at St Joseph. One witness said he had found no gold in the river, but recent descriptions of Honduras affirm there is plenty of gold. Two modern writers, Franck and Keenagh, give sad accounts of their hardships in the territory of Mosquito Shore, of the trying terrain, and of the awful roads. These could have been no better in 1823.

Possibly the tragic end of the expedition was not entirely the fault of Sir Gregor. Some of the misfortunes may have been due to lack of character in the settlers—note their deficient industry and the theft of clothing—but in that case Sir Gregor failed in securing only honest and industrious persons. His organisation may have been bad, or he was perhaps careless in choice of site, but he must have known the climate. He had boldly told the natives he had come to free them from Spanish oppression, and he had certainly fought under Bolivar. Dr Weatherhead, a survivor, as already mentioned, from Puerto Bello, considered that he was passionately desirous of freeing the South American countries. He may have believed in his plans, or possibly he thought himself a patriot, a Raleigh or a Drake.

On the other hand, his pose as Cacique, his ungallant conduct at Puerto Bello, his theatrical gestures, his Macgregor buttons,

his coat of arms on the dollar notes, and all his other flamboyant actions led many people in the home country to regard him as a poseur, or a knave, who was impelled by his own vainglory rather than by a desire to help his fellow-Scotsmen, and it is sad to read of the thrifty Scots who lost either their lives or all they possessed. The unfortunate end of the affair, of course, inflamed opinion against Macgregor. If the Poyais Expedition had succeeded judgment might have been very different.

We can see what Edinburgh thought of Sir Gregor when the *Evening Courant* of 5th February 1824 wrote: of the 'continued series of deceptions practised upon some poor misguided wretches in Britain by the agents of that adventurer Macgregor,' and went on to ridicule the arrival off Honduras, in a brig, of the Admiral of the Poyais fleet, in the person of an ex-captain of the Navy—'an Admiral without a fleet, without a port, without a roadstead, and without officers and men.' Readers of the account will form their own conclusions. Personally, I think Macgregor was an example of what psychology calls a 'split character,' a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

What was his end? He returned to Venezuela, where they gave him a pension and made him a general in the army, and there he died. It was perhaps his greatest misfortune that the musket-ball at Puerto Bello missed his head. If it had not, he would not have seen the final debacle of his ventures. He might have escaped the ridicule of his fellow-countrymen, perhaps even been thought a hero.

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## Incorrigible

(Julianus, Prefect of Egypt—6th century A.D. Greek Anthology, VII, 33)

*'Anacreon,  
You've long been gone;  
And, as I think,  
You died of drink.'  
'Yes, that's quite true;  
I liked it, too.  
And you who fast  
Will share at last  
The common lot  
Of man—so what?'*

DENIS TURNER.

# Twice-Told Tales

## VI.—Railway-Time Aggression

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of June 1851]

THERE is an 'aggression' far more insidious in its advances than the papal one, which is stealthily yet steadily progressing among us, and to whose impertinent attacks we would fain direct the indignant energy of our countrymen. Yes! Time, our best and dearest possession, is in danger. Old Time, beneath whose fingers tyrants tremble and empires crumble into dust, is now bearded by a power whose age is but of yesterday. He who, during the 'flight of ages past,' has only deigned to 'measure his motions by revolving spheres,' is now obliged, in many of our British towns and villages, to bend before the will of a vapour, and to hasten on his pace in obedience to the laws of a railway company! Was ever tyranny more monstrous or more unbearable than this? It has not even the merit of a poetic grandeur, for it is essentially prosaic, and, like all the baser tyrannies, it intermeddles with the domestic doings and social charities of life. Facts often speak more authoritatively than words. We shall therefore illustrate our meaning by the history of our own experience during a recent visit in the south of England.

On arriving at my friend's house, I found that a dinner-engagement had been made for that day, in which I was included. 'And,' said Mr Thompson, addressing his daughter, 'you must take care to be ready in time, as our good friends the Derings are, you know, very precise, and do not like their dinner to be delayed.' The young lady promised to be ready in proper time, and the dinner-hour being half-past six, we took care to drive up to Mr Dering's door a minute or two before that hour.

'We are in capital time,' observed Mr Thompson as he was stepping out of the carriage. On entering the drawing-room we found a large party already assembled, and although courteously received by our hosts, yet there was evidently a cloud resting

on the brow of Mr Dering, who, the moment after we were seated, addressed his wife in an abrupt tone, saying: 'I think, my dear, we had better order dinner now; Mr Cumming is too young a man to have any right to keep people waiting for him; and,' added he in a lower voice, yet loud enough for me to catch the words—'as it is, the dinner will be spoiled.'

Just at this moment Mr Cumming was announced, and our host, while shaking hands with him, said, half-gravely, half-jocosely: 'Ha! my good friend, so here you are at last! You are too fashionable a fellow, I suppose, ever to think about the hour?'

'Indeed, my dear sir!' replied the young man, 'I flattered myself with being punctual to a fault to-day'; and so saying, he drew out his watch and shewed that its hands were resting precisely on the hour of half-past six.

'But that is not railway-time,' observed Mr Dering; 'and you know that since yesterday morning, when the town-clock was changed, we have set all our watches and clocks by London time; so it is now not far from seven o'clock.'

'Ah! this accounts for my misdemeanour,' said Mr Cumming good-humouredly; 'for I have been spending a few days in the country, where the clocks are so old-fashioned as to be guided by the sun instead of the railway.'

'I have not the same excuse for my ignorance,' observed Mr Thompson, who had listened to the discussion; 'for I have been almost within hearing of the town-clock, and yet know nothing of the change: so we came to dinner by the old time.'

'Well, gentlemen,' replied Mr Dering, who had by this time recovered his good-humour, 'I can only say, that if the dinner is spoiled, you must lay it to the score of railway aggression, which will not suffer us to measure time, as our forefathers did, by the course of the sun.'

# The Rogue Elephant of Gangapur

SIRDAR

AS I have already told,\* Gangapur lies in a gorge on the banks of the Ganga river where it emerges from the foothills of the Himalayas in the United Provinces of India. A large irrigation-canal takes off from the river a short way below the town. At the time, very many years ago, when these incidents occurred I was a young engineer in charge of the headworks and upper reaches of this canal. There were no other Europeans within twenty miles, and I was alone for the greater part of the year, except for odd visitors who came during the cold weather for fishing and shooting.

There were forests on both sides of the river, which were teeming with game, and I spent many of my spare hours wandering about in these, seated on the Government elephant which was attached to my subdivision. In those days there were two herds of wild elephants not far off, one on either side of the river. I came on them several times during my outings; they never seemed to take the least notice of me, and I enjoyed watching the older ones feeding while the youngsters played around.

Wild elephants live a very peaceful life in Northern India; they are far too valuable to be shot. Male elephants will not breed as a rule in captivity, and so all those required for use have to be caught and tamed. On this account they are protected, and no elephant may be killed unless it has been first proclaimed under Government orders as dangerous. Thus, unlike other jungle animals, wild elephants have little to fear from man or beast. Indeed, as far as I know, the only

animal they do fear is the porcupine. An elephant's feet are one of the most vulnerable parts of its body, and, if a porcupine's quill becomes embedded in the foot, the wound may fester and cause intense pain. I think that this fear is the reason why tame elephants object so strongly to dogs and other small creatures.

Sometimes an old bull elephant will be turned out of the herd, and must thereafter live a solitary life. Occasionally these animals become a nuisance, and at times dangerous. A rogue elephant, as they are then called, may have to be proclaimed and shot.

OUR Government elephant lived in a shed situated on the high bank overlooking the river. One afternoon I got a message from the mahout begging me to come quickly, because a large male elephant, one of these solitary beasts, was on the island opposite and calling to our elephant. When I arrived the bull was emerging from the jungle on the island; he was a magnificent sight with his huge tusks, as he stood there looking at us across the water.

There was also a Hindu priest on the island, saying his prayers at the water's edge. A great number of canal servants had collected on top of the bank and they were calling across to the priest to clear out, as there was a wild elephant behind him; but the man sat on unmoved. My Hindu overseer came up to me in a very perturbed state; he said that the holy man was so engrossed in his prayers that he neither heard nor saw anything that was going on around him. As the overseer was speaking, the bull moved forward, and, spotting the priest, made a short run towards

\* See 'The Man-eater of Gangapur,' *Chambers's Journal* for November 1949.

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him. I have never seen a man turn tail so quickly. In one bound the priest was up and away, with his saffron robe flowing behind him, nor did he stop till he had rounded the point of the island.

The bull in the meantime had begun to ford the stream, obviously determined to reach our female elephant. I had a shotgun with me and so, loading with snipe-shot cartridges, I waited until the animal was about fifty yards away, and then fired at his chest. At that distance the snipe-shot would not penetrate his thick skin; it did, however, sting him a little, for he turned away. A second shot in the slack of his trousers sent him off to the centre of the stream, where he blew water on to his injured dignity behind.

After a bit he made off into the jungle on the island once more. Fearing that he would return as soon as it was dark, I went after him, and, stalking up behind some trees, I gave him another shot in the rear. This made him very angry, for he ran this way and that, trumpeting before he moved on. I followed, giving him a burst now and then whenever an opportunity offered. Once he caught sight of me and charged, but I slipped behind a big tree and he soon gave up the hunt. Eventually he decided that the place was unhealthy, and he cleared off.

After I had reported the matter, I got strict orders that the bull elephant was not to be allowed to cover our elephant, lest she should have a calf. The period of gestation of an elephant is eighteen to twenty-two months, and it would be unwise to work her for the latter part of this period. Also, once the calf is born, the mother will not budge without it. A baby elephant is a playful little beast and will lag behind; when it finds itself alone it will squeal, whereupon the mother will rush back, regardless of all obstacles—often a dangerous proceeding for those on her back. To make sure, I had a large nightdress of sacking made for our elephant; this reached to the ground on all sides and was securely tied on.

A few nights later the bull came back once more, and was only kept away by our lighting fires all round the elephant-house. Thereafter he made constant visits at night, and so I decided to send our elephant twenty miles down the canal to the headquarters of the division, hoping that the bull would soon get tired of his abortive wooing.

The night after she had left, he returned

and, finding her gone, he knocked down the elephant-house in his rage. He then followed her tracks for ten miles down the canal-bank. There he stayed for a week in a piece of jungle before making off finally into the forest. I asked my Executive Engineer to apply to have him proclaimed, but he told me that a keddah—that is to say, an elephant hunt—was approaching Gangapur, and it was hoped that he would be captured.

**A** KEDDAH in the United Provinces is run on different lines from one in Southern India or Assam. There, a central stockade is made with a long bell-mouth entrance extending out into the forest. A herd is carefully driven until it is inside the bell-mouth; it is then forced forward into the stockade, and so trapped, to be roped up at leisure. In the United Provinces, however, herds are few and far between, and therefore single elephants separated from the herd are run down and captured in the open. About a hundred and fifty tame elephants are required for this work. On the day of the hunt a few of these are silently driven in amongst the herd, which has been marked down ahead. The main body of tame elephants is stationed in an open piece of forest near at hand. A wild elephant, grazing a little apart, is selected for capture, and those who have joined the herd gradually work her away from the others as quietly as possible without raising suspicion. In this way they edge her towards the main body of tame elephants. Eventually she realises that she is being hunted. By that time her retreat has been cut off, and she rushes wildly in the direction in which she is being driven.

A wild elephant, accustomed to an easy life, cannot run far without being winded, and will soon turn to fight. By now the main body of tame elephants will have arrived, and the victim will be surrounded. A ring is formed and some male fighting elephants, specially trained for the purpose, are driven in. While the wild elephant's attention is attracted towards one side, one of these huge males charges from the flank, knocking the victim over. At once the whole circle surges forward, and ropes are thrown in an attempt to lasso one of the feet of the beast lying on the ground. Sometimes it has to be knocked down more than once before it can be roped fore and aft, ready to be dragged away to the camp.



## THE ROGUE ELEPHANT OF GANGAPUR

It is amazing how quickly a wild elephant can be trained. It is given plenty to eat, including sugar-cane, which it loves. Also, for the first time in its life, it gets whole-meal cakes; an elephant in captivity is usually provided with ten to sixteen pounds of these cakes daily. Its principal food, however, is the small branches of certain trees, generally of the fig species. It is interesting to watch the animal carefully strip the bark off branches two to four inches thick, before eating the soft heart-wood inside.

If an elephant is troublesome, it is neither beaten nor starved; everything is done to coax it to obey the words of command during its training. But should it be obstinate, it is not allowed to sleep, and this soon breaks the spirit of resistance. A tame elephant is stationed on either side night and day, and if the culprit closes an eye these guards are driven in with a jolt, which wakes it effectively and makes it dread a recurrence.

There is a special elephant language, with a few simple words of command. A captured animal soon learns what is wanted by watching a trained elephant obey these words. After a short time the trainer will be able to take the captive for walks, sitting on its neck in the customary manner. It takes months, all the same, before the animal gets used to strange sights and sounds, such as a man on a horse, or a bullock-cart, or a shot fired from a rifle near at hand.

**W**HEN the keddah reached Gangapur, our old friend, the solitary bull, was tracked down and found to be living about ten miles upstream. He had been causing a certain amount of trouble, hunting travellers on the road which ran up the valley. Incidentally, he had killed two of the buffaloes which I had tied up as tiger bait. They were found about a hundred yards from where they had been tethered, with every bone in their bodies broken. The elephant appeared to have played football with the carcasses, for some reason best known to himself.

A number of elephants were sent to capture this rogue. He was too wild, however, and always broke away when hunted. Eventually he got tired of being chased, and one night he walked boldly into the camp where all the elephants were tied up. He charged three of these tame elephants, wounding them badly with his great tusks, before he took off into

the forest once more. It was realised that he was far too dangerous an animal ever to be tamed, and so the keddah elephants were withdrawn, and he was proclaimed. After that, anyone could shoot him.

The old warrior next turned up at a forest-officer's camp. One night when the officer was at dinner his servants came running to tell him that the bull had arrived and was making love to his female elephant. Collecting his rifle he rushed out and, catching the rogue at a rather unfair disadvantage, he fired a bullet into the animal's head. When the elephant fell to the ground he fired a second bullet, again into the head, to make certain of killing him. The officer then returned to his tent and made arrangements to have the carcass cut up and buried next day—no mean task.

Some hours later, after he had gone to bed, he heard his servants calling that the bull had recovered and was making love to his elephant once more. It was evident that the beast had only been stunned, and when he had regained consciousness he had proved himself the perfect, if somewhat persistent, lover! An elephant has a very small brain, and a bullet to be effective must pierce the skull at the side of the head in a small area in front of the ear. The great forehead, which looks so vulnerable, is composed entirely of bone-cells. This will stop the bullet of any ordinary rifle, and the animal will only be stunned.

**A**FTER this incident the rogue disappeared for several months, and we began to hope that he had retired into the heart of the forest for good. Then one day I heard that he was back in his old haunt near the valley road, and, further, that he had killed an unsuspecting traveller. This was serious. He must be destroyed as soon as possible.

Two days afterwards, on a moonlight night, he returned once more to serenade my female elephant. A young forest-officer on tour was with me at the time, and so, fetching our rifles, we ran out and saw the rogue being driven towards us by a number of canal servants with torches and lanterns. They were making a hideous noise, shouting and banging drums and tin cans.

I had a double-barrel .500 express rifle and some low-pressure cordite cartridges loaded with solid bullets. My friend had a single-barrel .450 high-velocity rifle. These were not

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ideal weapons with which to try to kill an elephant.

We took cover behind a tree, and, as the rogue rushed past us, we fired three shots into his head. He was in the shade of the trees, so the light was not very good; also, he was moving at a great pace. Anyhow, we missed the vital spot, for he trumpeted and carried on across some open ground. Suddenly he stopped and, turning round, he saw us following him. At once, curling up his trunk, he charged. I rushed behind a big tree, hoping to get two more shots at the side of his head as he passed. My companion did a very foolish thing. He knelt down where he was and waited for the elephant to come nearer. If we did not turn the rogue, he would be trampled to death. Without waiting, I fired two more shots at the same time as my friend pressed the trigger. The elephant stopped dead in his tracks; down went his great head, his tusks were buried deep in the ground as he turned a complete somersault on to his back. He lay stunned for a minute or two, and then, rising suddenly, he made off and buried himself in a dense piece of forest near the canal.

After that, we followed him more carefully. We could only locate him by the angry noises he was making, for the shadows were very deep under the trees. We realised that, with our very inadequate armament, we would have to get very close to be able to see sufficiently clearly to enable us to place our bullets

in the vulnerable area on the side of his head. It was a tricky business, for the beast kept running from side to side and sometimes trumpeting loudly. Even when we did get fairly near him we found that he was facing away from us. Before he turned sideways, to give us a chance of shooting to kill, he would be off again on one of his mad rushes, and the stalk would have to begin all over again.

We spent three hours in this manner, till at last he seemed to become quieter, and we were able to get within twenty yards of the beast. There we waited behind trees, till eventually he turned sideways and gave us the chance we had been waiting for. This time we made no mistake; our bullets found the right spot, and he sank slowly to his knees and rolled over. There was no need to fire again. The rogue was dead.

Our servants soon arrived with lanterns, and I could not but feel sorry as I looked at the magnificent animal. After all, he had done nothing in the first instance but follow his natural instincts; it was only when he had been harried by man that he had become dangerous. In later years I had much to do with elephants, and I learned to love and respect them, chiefly because they are so clever and affectionate. Looking back now over all my jungle experiences, there is nothing that I regret more than having participated in the destruction of the rogue elephant of Gangapur.

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## Take Away Glory

*Take away glory,  
What remains?  
A sword that is broken,  
A naked blade of grass,  
A withered tree in the wind.*

*But take away faith,  
Is there aught to be found?  
A scabbard, tarnished,  
And flung to the ground;  
A black blade stamped,  
Grained in the earth;  
A withered tree,  
Whose upturned roots  
In gnarled supplication  
Plead with the dying wind.*

PATRICIA HUMPHREY.

# A Doctor's Day in Persia

ELSPETH IRVING

SUN. A blistering, white, pitiless sun. Sand. The utter desiccation of a salt plain. Human bodies. Mere dried-up husks of unquenchable thirst and unceasing itch. In short—midsummer in a central Persian desert. Every afternoon, it seemed, an infernal furnace-door burst open and the blast, like a liberated jinn, screamed across the land and in its passage deposited yet another layer of dust over pitiful attempts at gardens, over carpets, beds, food, everything.

Unfortunate hospital patients lay gasping, throwing off a sheet in vain hope of cooling, only to draw it back at a swirl of fine sand that stung like nettles and gritted in the teeth. No door could keep it out. Even in the operating-theatre the trail of the dust devils lay thick.

Blessed be God! They had to endure it for only one day more. To-morrow would be the first of Arrow month, the date on which the greater part of the city trekked to the mountains. The city hospital closed, all possible patients went home, the remainder were taken on donkeys, along with mobile hospital equipment, on a twenty-four-hour journey to a spot 5000 feet above. The city was left to the sun, the scorpion, and the beggar.

But that was still a day ahead. The doctor and the matron sweated in the heat over lists of drugs and equipment and plans for the safe transport of patients, while orderlies packed compartment boxes, cleverly formed to hold goods of the correct weight for a donkey pannier. That finished, although the midday air in the streets was torture to lungs, the doctor paid a final visit to a few patients. Then with a long glass of iced Persian sherbet he stepped gratefully down dark cellar steps to the comparative coolness of an underground room.

Five minutes passed.

'Doctor, doctor, can you come up? A man wants to see you.'

Reluctantly the doctor emerged, wincing at the glare of the naked day. A man striving to be polite in spite of desperate anxiety came forward. 'Sir, forgive me. I beg and beseech you to come at once. I have a car at the door.'

'What is the matter? We are very busy to-day. We shall be passing through your village to-morrow. Can you not wait till then?'

'Oh no, doctor. Please bring your honourable presence immediately. My wife has been gored by a bull. We dare not touch her. She is lying in the street. She has not been moved an inch.' As his agitation increased, he forgot his stilted, polite speech and grasped the doctor's coat. 'God knows whether she is still alive. Voi! Voi! What will become of my children. Oh God! What shall I do? What shall I do?'

With sweat leaping from every pore, the doctor was already on his way to get supplies. Ten minutes later, with a parcel of sandwiches and everything required for an emergency operation, he and the man were bumping along the uneven city lanes between high, windowless, mud walls that radiated oven heat. Every other soul was underground, not even a dog moved. The sun was absolute monarch.

Out of the town, across twenty miles of open desert the old car raced with windows tightly closed against stinging sand and blistering wind. In the shade of verandahs the thermometer stood at 120 degrees. The temperature of the desert was unimaginable.

In an hour the two were making their way along narrow village lanes, deep in dust, and were stopped by a small crowd which parted before them. A glance showed the helpless bundle of torn and dusty rags bulging with a Caesarean operation half-performed by the bull's horn.

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The crowd was galvanised into activity. A fireplace was built behind an adjacent broken wall, a brushwood fire built, and a huge iron pot put on to boil. Several women made a screen with their *chaddurs* of village tartan and others were disposed of by sending them off home to boil samovars, and to eat neglected dinners.

In half-an-hour, in an operating-theatre formed of a dust floor and walls of tartans supported by caryatids, the operation was commenced and rapidly completed in spite of frequent faintings on the part of the living walls. Only then was the patient moved. The village headman produced a wooden bench, there were numerous offers of pillows and padded quilts, and before long the patient was in most unaccustomed comfort in the shade of a great walnut-tree.

By the time all was cleared up, the soft, hot desert sun was setting in palest, dusty rainbow shades. As the sun went down behind the mighty western mountains a full moon was born from the sand of the desert. The temperature would not fall all night below 100 degrees.

WITH wet clothes clinging to his weary body, the doctor sat beside his patient. The housewives, having obeyed injunctions to provide unlimited hot water, now insisted that the doctor drink unlimited cups of sweet tea. A supper of half-a-dozen fried eggs and a large dish of peaches followed, and, one by one, the sleepy villagers departed. With absolute trust in the doctor's power to avert hovering demons, and worn out by excitement, relatives lay in a sleeping circle on the ground. Peacefully the village slumbered; peacefully the woman slept; alone the doctor kept his watch. Occasionally a tarantula spider, with hairy body, as large as a mouse, moved across a moonlit patch, from shadow to black shadow. The glory of moonlight lay on silent snow-peaks above and seemed to draw some of the fever from the exhausted city below.

After necessary ministrations in the morning, the headman placed a carpet in his cellar, in the centre of which a blue-tiled goldfish-pond gave an illusion of coolness, and the doctor thankfully stretched his cramped limbs. Politeness, however, required that he carry on a constant conversation with his host's numerous friends and relations. Only when the all-powerful midday sun drove them to their

couches did the gossiping, tea-drinking, nut-munching crowd disperse.

In the evening the hospital caravan arrived and with it a young Parsi doctor to take charge of the patient. After many final words the doctor at last was allowed to mount a donkey, and the climb commenced. The sun set, silence was broken only by an occasional jackal cry, cerebration was suspended. A donkey placing sure, little hoofs through the boulders of moraines and foothills has only one possible rate of progression. One accepts it without thought and wastes no nervous energy on futile attempts to hustle.



SLOWLY, and wonderfully steadily, the procession of sick and their attendants wound through clear-cut moon-shadows up and up the barren rocky heights. As the sky lighted to dawn, the click of hoofs was muffled by the deep dust of a village street. An obstruction lay across the path. The column was on the edge of the village cemetery and noses told only too forcibly that an interment had taken place not many days before. Was another body about to be buried? Dismounting, the doctor investigated the bundle lying on a wooden door. It groaned, and a man was disclosed with a leg the size of a bolster, from which the splintered end of a bone protruded. A few sleepy figures emerged from stone huts.

'Why did you not bring him down to the town when it happened?'

'Oh, we knew you would be coming up this road in a week or so and it was not worth while taking the journey.'

'We cannot stop here now. Are you willing for us to take him up with us to the high village?'

'Take him. We can't do anything for him here.'

So a rider was dismounted, the new patient draped across a saddle, where the weight of his hanging leg somewhat alleviated jolts and shocks.

The road became steeper. In some places steps had been cut to prevent slipping on a smooth rock face. The glare of the sun, reflected from rock, was hurting to the eyes, although the stifling heat of the plains had been left behind.

Another mountain hamlet, and another obstruction across the road. A young lad still bleeding from terrible cuts received the pre-

vious day from a fall over a cliff. Another rider dismounted to give him a place.

Steeper and steeper grew the track. A mountain-torrent thundered alongside. Villages shaded by nut and fruit trees were met more frequently. Cultivated terrace patches appeared. The door of each stone house opened on a level with the roof of the one below. No more than a couple of miles to go now.

A group of men rose from the shadow of a wayside boulder. 'Come in here, please. It's urgent. We have been waiting two days for you.'

The doctor could hardly repress a groan. In the darkness of a windowless hut silent, suffering eyes gleamed. It was a case of

strangulated hernia. Thank goodness there was not much further to go.

Servants had gone ahead. The house was prepared. But more accommodation was needed for the extra patients, and the village was already crowded with townspeople. A small shady garden was finally secured. A few wooden beds were hired and, the operating-room being ready, the unfortunates were dealt with. At long last, all were comfortable.

Light-headed from the height of 9000 feet, and from three days and two nights without sleep, the doctor staggered to a tent set under the shade of a small apple-tree. While little sweet sun-toasted apples pattered on the tent roof, he sank luxuriantly into glorious billows of sleep.

## White-Faces

### *Hereford Cattle and Their History*

OLIVER CASSELS

WHERE did these Herefords originate—these white-faces that crowd the watering-places of the western plains of the U.S.A., these sleek beasts that fatten on the lush pastures of Uruguay and thrive on sparse grasslands in Australia? What is their history, and who were the men that made it? And why does half the world demand the best blood of the breed to improve their herds?

This last question was well answered by Alvin Sanders, famous judge of cattle and managing editor of the *Chicago Breeder's Gazette*, when, nearly fifty years ago, he said: 'It has always been demonstrated that Herefords are great cattle wherever grass grows. . . . I venture the assertion that Herefords will make more beef on grass than any other breed of which I have any knowledge.' That assertion has been made a hundred times since, as

it had been made a hundred times before, and if proof of the statement were needed it can be found in that old-fashioned ring where the Hereford Herd Book Society organises its sales.

These qualities of making beef on grass and thriving under adverse conditions, which have always been the pride of the Hereford breeder, are not, however, flukes—they do not just happen in a breed. There are sound underlying reasons, hereditary and controlled, to account for them.

Herefordshire, the home of the breed, from which these red cattle with the white faces have spread to so many other lands, is a fair English county whose borders march with Wales. It was in the early part of the 17th century that the writer and geographer, John Speed, published a work on the British Islands, in which he said of this county: 'The climate



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is most healthful and the soil so fertile for corn and cattle that no place in England yieldeth more or better conditioned.'

The country is undulating and folded into long ridges, the crests of which are closely wooded; and the views from these hills are always wide, even if the air holds that blue haze that tells of a damp climate. The valleys are well watered by many rivers that run eastward out of Wales, to drop south through the county before they empty into the Severn and its estuary. It is a land of black-and-white half-timbered houses, set along quiet lanes deep among orchards and hopyards, sheltered by the low hills. A peaceful, conservative land—I nearly said feudal—where the kindly fingers of the past are still allowed to soothe the fever of progress.

Always, against the western horizon, there can be seen the dark wall of the Black Mountains of Brecon, which are rain-makers to Herefordshire. These mountains are well named, for only the light and shadow of sunlight on occasional snow reveal their ridges and recesses and soften their blue-black hardness. They rise gradually from the south, where the entrance to their valleys is guarded by Skirrid Fawr, the Cleft Mountain—cleft when the Devil used it for his seat, so legend has it. Attaining their full height in the north, they drop suddenly in precipitous escarpment to the valley through which the river Wye, famed for its salmon, debouches from Wales.

**I**N his book John Speed went on to write of the cattle of the county in these words: 'The Hereford breed of cattle, taking it all in all, may, without risk, I believe, be deemed the first breed of cattle in this Island.' Speed was supported in his opinion by the practical men, the graziers of the 17th and 18th centuries, who fattened oxen for the butchers of Smithfield Market in London. These men have left us their recorded acknowledgment of the capacity of the breed to fatten rapidly.

We know that one of them, J. H. Campbell, a farmer of Charlton in the county of Kent, fattened cattle for the London market in 1779, and probably before that date. Of Hereford cattle he wrote that he 'knew, from experience, through trials of various breeds, none that would fatten on less food and few that would not require more than the true Hereford breed.'

The recorded weights of oxen fattened in

those days dispel any suspicion we may harbour that the size of the barons of beef behind which our forefathers sat at dinner was exaggerated. It was this same farmer Campbell who in the year 1787 commenced to feed a lean Hereford ox. Two years later this ox, then seven years old, was sold to the butchers at the healthy live weight of 3360 pounds. Campbell tells us that even at this stage of adiposity the animal still walked easily with an athletic gait, and ate with unimpaired appetite any food given to it, including the straw that was thrown to it for bedding.

The cattle of those days were very different from the type we are now accustomed to. They were bred for the yoke and for the milk-pail, and beef was a secondary consideration. Not all Englishmen could afford to eat meat, the demand for which grew in later years. These beasts were tall, rough, and angular, with big bone and wide, upspreading horns, and their colours were red, mottled, or grey, although the bald face was a mark of the true Hereford. They matured slowly, and not until they had attained full growth, at five or more years, did graziers attempt to fatten them.

But the yoke spelt strength and hardiness, and poor fare bred in them the capacity to make the best of adverse conditions. It was these qualities that the earliest improvers of the breed seized upon as a basis for their work and which their successors have been concentrating into their cattle ever since. It has taken the genius of many men, and generations of skilled, patient work to produce the modern Hereford, with its fine bone and horn, its neat, compact, quick-maturing body, and its red-and-white markings that show up so well the points of an excellent beast.

The fathers of the breed started their work of improvement more than two hundred years ago. They were small tenant-farmers, who wanted better cattle for their own practical purposes, and in many cases they farmed land that would not support theory or fashion. Their aims were strictly utilitarian, and their means, until they had established their herds, were very limited. They had neither the land nor the resources to pamper their cattle, but their methods were sound, as their results have proved.

William Hewer, one of the most successful and best-known of these pioneers, describing the disadvantages under which he laboured, wrote that his farm was 'half-mountain land, a sharp gravelly soil yielding almost sapless

herbage.' And yet his bulls were known over half a kingdom for their good condition. In truth, these men worked under circumstances that made for hardiness in their cattle and gave the stock the capacity to make the best of their fodder.

The early Hereford breeders were quiet, steady workers, with no liking for publicity. They were of jealous disposition and grudged others gaining advantage from their work. Few outside their own families acquired specimens of their best blood-stock. These traits were common in the county and persist to this day; and who can say that they show other than strength of character. The men of Hereford are clannish, and in many ways grasping, and they are equally unwilling to remain under obligation to any man.

There can be no doubt that these characteristics were the cause of the general failure on the part of cattle-raisers, in the first half of the 19th century, to appreciate the work of early Hereford breeders. The resulting lack of knowledge of the breed accounts in large measure for the start gained by other types in the race for popularity.

When Herefords were first introduced into the North American continent, many stockmen were already committed to other breeds and did not welcome these newcomers to fame. Their jealousies led to the 'Battle of the Breeds,' which racked the industry with bitter rivalries difficult to understand in these days of breed tolerance. But the case for the Hereford in America was fought against cut-throat competition and prejudice by a band of devoted and able men, and the breed has now come into its own there as well as in other continents.

**M**ANY breeders played a part in the improvement of Hereford cattle, but credit for being the first to start this work is generally given to two men, a father and son, both Benjamin Tomkins by name. Their story is one of an idea carried from small beginnings to successful conclusion by means of steady work and brilliant ability, for these two men were undoubtedly masters of their craft of cattle-breeding.

The elder man started on a farm that still carries the same name—Court House Farm—as it did over two hundred years ago. It lies within half-an-hour's walk of my front-door, and Wellington Court, the holding on which

he and his son set the seal on their work, shares fences with my garden. Wellington Court is one of a cluster of three farmsteads under the shadow of the church in the village of Wellington, where hang tablets to the memory of the two Tomkins. At least one of these houses is scheduled for preservation under the National Trust on account of its stonework and old oak.

It must have been early in his life that the elder Tomkins formed the idea of developing a better type of animal than any existing at that time. It is likely that he had in mind the rising importance of England's manufacturing and commercial interests and foresaw an increasing demand for butcher-meat, and a new source of profit in cattle besides the yoke and the pail.

It is certain that he had no option but to start on a very modest scale. He was one of the seven children of a small yeoman-farmer, Richard Tomkins of New House Farm, Kings Pyon, near Hereford, who managed, however, in spite of his small means, to give his family a sound education, even at a time when many of the middle classes could neither read nor write.

When Richard died in 1723, he bequeathed to his son Benjamin a cottage and a little land, together with a cow called Silver and her calf. Even at this, Benjamin seems to have benefited more than his brothers, and there is some evidence that his father, in leaving the cow Silver to the lad, wished to encourage an interest in cattle. The widow was left the farm for life, and this, in his turn, Benjamin managed for his mother. But his younger brothers were growing up, and when they were old enough to take his place in the home, he had no choice but to seek employment. This he proceeded to do, and was hired as dairyman at Alton Court Farm in the parish of Dilwyn, in the immediate neighbourhood.

It was while Benjamin held this position that his employer brought to the dairy two cows that were to have immense influence on the destiny of the breed. They are believed to have been bought at Kington, on the Welsh border, and there can be no doubt that they must have been out of the common, for Tomkins at once noticed an extraordinary tendency in these two cows to put on fat.

Fortunately we know the conditions under which these cows were kept. Artificial foods were not used in those days and the Alton Court pastures are by no means rich feed-

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ing lands. Nevertheless these two animals fattened much more rapidly than others under the same conditions and Tomkins must have been greatly impressed by them. He saw in these two cows some of the characteristics he desired to conserve and intensify for his purpose of breeding an improved type of cattle that would thrive on inferior pastures.

**I**N 1742 Benjamin Tomkins married his employer's daughter and set up on his own account at the Court House Farm at Canon Pyon. He now had the means to start systematic breeding with materials that he had already chosen and which certainly included the two cows from Kington, together with the descendants of the cow Silver, left by his father.

The pastures at Canon Pyon were no better than those at Alton Court, and from the first the cattle were never pampered. Tomkins was successful from the outset and accumulated means so rapidly that by the year 1758 he was able to extend his holding by taking Wellington Court; and here he and his son, who was born in 1745, worked together for nearly thirty years. Between them they acquired four or five holdings, on each of which they bred their cattle. Thus they were able to keep their strains distinct and carry on their systems of line breeding without using very near affinities.

So closely was the work of the Tomkinses co-ordinated and blended, and so successfully did they avoid unwanted publicity, that early historians of the breed have fallen into the error of recording their work as that of one single individual of the name. Each of these two men, working alone, enjoyed the greatest success. Their united judgment during the thirty years they worked together can only have been phenomenal.

The elder Tomkins was a quiet, conscientious worker and made money by the sale of his improved cattle. The son inherited his father's qualities, but the Tomkins cattle would have spread faster if the younger man had not been so extremely jealous of others obtaining his best blood. Many of his finest bulls were slaughtered at home for the harvest men rather than that others should have them;

and many of his best cows, sold to the butchers, were resold by them for breeding.

Not until after the death of the younger man in 1815 was the great value of the work of the two Tomkinses recognised, and then only as the result of a dispersal sale of his herd, a sale that has become famous in the annals of the breed and which drew universal attention to these cattle.

It is unfortunate that at the time when these two men were systematically transforming the Herefords from rough, bony, draught- and dairy-cattle into a first-rate beef-producing breed no records were kept. They regarded their systems as trade secrets and their experience as stock-in-trade, not to be shared or passed on to possible competitors. But for over seventy years, without break, the two Benjamin Tomkinses, father and son, applied an effective system and masterly ability to the improvement of their stock, and it is no wonder that the history of the Hereford breed shows that all the old famous herds of which records exist can be traced back to 'Old Tomkins's Prime Cattle.'

**T**HE work of improvement still goes on. It has never stopped. But, although aims and ambitions are the same, there is one fundamental difference between the breeder of to-day and his forerunner of two centuries ago. The Tomkinses, the Galliers, the Hewers, and the Pryces of another era saw their profits within the limits of their own herds and were jealous of their blood. But the Smiths, the Griffithses, and the Joneses of to-day see their profit in the herds of far countries which require the continuous flow of native blood to maintain breeding standards.

There is a story that is dear to the heart of every Hereford man, and that will never grow stale while farmers meet. It is told as a matter of pride. It concerns an American G.I. making his first wartime journey through the county. On seeing a herd of Hereford cattle grazing near the railroad, he turned to his buddy in gratified astonishment and said: 'Now what d' you know? They've even got our white-faces here.' I speak for every man of Hereford when I say that that G.I. can have the freedom of the county when he wills.

# Kelly's Ghost

FRANK CELESTE

'WHST,' said Kelly, with a derogatory flip of a large hand, 'there's nothing to be afraid of in ghosts, so there's not.'

Attention in the bar turned to him, for in a spot like Ballycuddy any disrespect to the supernatural was not to be passed over lightly. It was Big Paddy who took up the challenge. 'Faith, an' who's this talkin'? P'what do you know of ghosts an' all, whin you've niver seen hand or limb o' wan o' them?'

Kelly paused, his glass halfway to his large mouth. 'It's you that's talking a lot of what ye know nothing, Paddy Mayhew,' he retorted. 'If ye but knew it, ye're speaking now to a man who's not only seen wan of the divils, but who likely as not is the only man in Ould Oireland who lost the best job iver he had on account of wan.'

All other conversation faded before this weighty statement; even McGinty behind the bar folded his arms and pursed his thin lips. Big Paddy put down his glass, and rubbed his strawberry of a nose aggressively with the back of his hand. 'Lost a job on account of a ghost!' he snorted. 'Ha-ha. Ye've been drinkin' more than is good for you, so you have. — Hear him, McGinty? — It's you, Michael Kelly, that should feel shame for coming to a respectable house to put your lying tongue to sich stories, so you should.'

Kelly did not take umbrage at this. Although some were surprised at his apparent meek acceptance of the insult, most regulars of the Pig and Shamrock knew him better than to expect otherwise. Without immediate reply he finished his beer, which pleasant task over, he then slowly filled his pipe, lit it with great deliberation, and leaned back to puff a big cloud of smoke up at the blackened rafters.

'TWOULD be a few years back now,' he began, speaking very slowly, and ad-

ressing his remarks to nobody in particular, 'whin I was a young man working up in Dublin. Gintleman's servint thin I was, and honest work it was too—and there's them who have niver done the loike of that, so there are,' this with a sidelong glance at Paddy, who stopped grinning suddenly and busied himself sneezing into a large red handkerchief.

'It happened one day that the master wint away for a month and left me alone to care for his grand house—big it was and no mistake. He knew he could trust me to look after things, so he did, and roight well I managed, you have my word.

'The second noight after he wint I'd gone up to the master's study to tidy up a little, and there, sitting peaceful on the table, as large as loife itself, there he was, waiting for me.' He paused to spit accurately into the fire, while his audience waited with one question trembling on many lips. It was McGinty who eventually broached it. 'An' who, if I may be so polite as to ask, was *he*?'

Kelly made a great show of surprise. 'Who?' he repeated. 'Why, the ghost, so it was, sitting there as calm as you please, and me it was as could see roight through him just loike wan of those raincoats the ladies wear in town these days.

'Young fellow he was, and very polite. He seemed glad to see me, and no doubt he was lonely there all on his own. He told me all about himself, and how it was his business to haunt the house on account of his having strangled his young wife there a couple o' hundred years before. It must indeed have been boring to be stuck in wan house all that time with niver a chance to talk to a body. He thought it would be company for me to have him around, as so it was, and I got to loiking him; he seemed a dacent enough chap and a gintleman himself from his talk.

'He was well-behaved for a ghost, and,'

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this with a sly glance at Paddy, 'not loike some ignorant divils you find to-day, he didn't make a lot of noise over nothing at all. He niver worried me, but used to follow me about the house whin I had work to do. Being an eddicated man he was good company, so he was. At noight he stayed in the room next to mine, though whether he slept there is something I could not tell.

'It took me, I'll own, a day or two to get used to his popping in and out without opening doors; but he was an understanding man, and whin I tould him cf it he made a habit of whistling before he came in; it gave me time to get ready for him. Oh, he was a very thoughtful young fellow, and in general we got along foine together. I began to think it would be a pity that he would have to vanish again whin the master came back.

'IT seemed no time at all before the master did return. I remember well the evening that Mortimer (that was the spalpeen's name) and I parted, so I do. One thing about him was that he was fond of a drink; and we had a last nip together that noight.' Kelly paused, his eyes fixed reflectively on the rafters.

'Ah!' he continued, 'one lesson it taught me, so it did. Niver, niver trust a ghost, me bhoys. That I should have known, for a man who will murder his poor wife won't stop at something a good deal more wicked, that he won't!

'I lost my job in that nice, comfortable

house, and all on account of being soft-hearted and wanting to help a lonely soul.' Again he paused, possibly expecting a challenge to his narrative, but his listeners wisely kept silence, so he went on, more as if merely thinking aloud than as if seeking to make public his tale of woe.

'A dozen bottles of Finney's Ould Oirish there were in the cellar, and all gone whin the master came back. Not a drop was there left, and me it was that was asked to explain where it had all gone. What could I do? The ignorant spalpeen wouldn't show up to help me out, so he wouldn't.' He lapsed once more into contemplation of the ceiling, perhaps in search of words to round off his story.

'He must have put something in my drink,' he said at length, 'for, by Saint Patrick himself, 'twas the only drop I had all the evening, 'et asleep I was to be sure whin the master came in—asleep on the study floor, so I was. And what was more—the crafty devil!—he'd strewn empty bottles all over the house, so can you wonder at my young gentleman thinking that I'd drunk the stuff myself?

'Another pint, McGinty, and may it please the Lord to show mercy to the poor ignorant souls that haven't got intelligence enough to believe the truth whin it's tould them.' His gaze was steady and his voice brimming with piety as he concluded. Although his eyes roamed hopefully round the bar, nobody took up the challenge, not even Big Paddy, whose only belief in spirits entailed a bottle to hold them.

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### The Old Recorder

*When Drake was playing bowls you sang aloud,  
But now you lie behind museum glass,  
And very few out of the drifting crowd  
Do more than pause a moment as they pass.*

*Yet once you heard the dancers' festive feet  
Tap out your measure at a country ball,  
Or to some lover's lyric, soft and sweet,  
Your music echoed round the rafters hall.*

*Now I imagine, with a sudden thrill,  
A ghostly hand that passes through the pane,  
And lips that breathe upon your dust until  
The voice of Merrie England speaks again.*

EVA NENDICK.



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## Hygiene Among the Fruit

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THERE are those who have preached that if the soil is properly manured over a period of years, the humus content thus being raised, then pests and diseases will absent themselves and there will be no need to spray or to dust. Unfortunately, this millennium does not seem to have started yet, and those of us who do use compost in a big way and who mulch our fruit-trees and fruit-bushes in the early summer still have to spray. There is no 5-day week for the fruit-grower!

The raspberry is a typical example. The fruits may be setting well, and yet before long they will be maggoty as the result of an attack by the raspberry-beetle. It is necessary, therefore, to spray with liquid derris. This is not poisonous to human beings or to animals, but it is deadly to this pest, at any rate. If the first spraying can be done about the middle of June and the second spraying towards the end of the month, all should be well. The beetles also attack loganberries and blackberries, and so it is necessary to spray these too, but with the blackberry it is better to delay spraying until the beginning of July and to give the second washing fourteen days later.

Those gardeners who dislike wet spraying of any kind must use a proprietary derris dust. This should not be applied when the fruit is ripening, or an unsightly deposit will remain. Dust, if possible, when the flowers are fully out and the little beetles are egg-laying.

Another trouble which affects raspberries is cane-spot. Circular purple dots or spots are found towards the base of young canes and it is not long before the spots elongate and may become  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch or more long. Then the centre of the elliptical centre of the spots will turn white and a pitting may occur. In bad cases the spots will grow together and form ugly patches, and then cane distortion will take place. Sometimes the leaves become infected and circular spots appear in the foliage. I have even known the berries to be misshapen because of this disease. Cut out and burn any badly cankered or spotted canes and spray in mid-June and again in late June with a colloidal copper wash, which can usu-

ally be bought as Bouisol. An alternative is to use lime-sulphur, a brown, somewhat evil-smelling liquid, which is dissolved at the rate of 1 pint in 39 pints of water. Next year, start the spraying about mid-May.

Readers of *Chambers's Journal* often send me specimens to examine, and from these I can form the opinion that the codlin-moth is getting a far more serious pest in this country than it was before the war. This causes the maggoty apple, and the trouble is sometimes termed the apple-worm for this reason. Do not confuse the codlin-moth with the apple-sawfly, which will attack apples and cause them to be maggoty. The sawfly-attacked specimens usually fall to the ground in June or early July, but the maggoty victims of the codlin-moth never fall until late August or September. Sawfly maggots always emit a nasty odour when pricked with the penknife, but codlin-moth caterpillars have no smell.

The moths lay their eggs singly on the surface of the fruits any time from the second week of June until the beginning of August, and the baby caterpillars then burrow their way inwards. The caterpillars, of course, hibernate, under loose bark in the winter, and therefore the use of a good tar distillate wash each December is essential. I have had on more than one occasion to recommend the scraping of the trunks of old trees with a coarse currycomb so as to get rid of useless loose bark before spraying is carried out. However, the first summer spraying must take place before the end of the second week of June, the formula being 1 lb. of lead-arsenate paste to 25 gallons of water. Direct the spray on to the developing fruitlets, and if some of the maggots have already penetrated the surface of the apple add 2 ounces of nicotine to the spray mixture already advised, plus a spreader like Shellestol. A second spraying must be given fourteen days later.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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## Science at Your Service

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### A PLASTIC METAL FOR COLD REPAIRS

**A** PLASTIC metal that can be applied like putty, but which dries much harder than lead and can, after setting, be filed, chiselled, tapped, drilled, or hammered, undoubtedly offers a wide range of opportunities for repairing damaged or worn metal articles. With the increasing shortage of domestic metal goods this new product should prove a boon to the handyman. The metal will repair dented, holed, or rust-worn sections. It is impervious to water, petrol, and oils, and can stand up to pressures as high as 150 lb. per square inch. It cannot safely withstand temperatures higher than that of boiling water, however, and must not be used for repairing parts of engines or other equipment likely to get very hot.

The plastic metal itself is packed in tins; it has a paste-like consistency. The metal surface to be repaired must be thoroughly cleaned before applying the plastic paste. A liquid solvent is also available, and this can be used both to thin the paste when necessary and to degrease the surface before treating. For repairing larger holes a tough, fibrous sheeting-material is available. This sheeting must first be immersed for a few seconds in the special solvent and it can then be used as a base for applying the plastic metal.

Finishing work on the plastic-metal surface after application must be left until the material has dried and hardened, when filing or sandpapering will produce almost undetectable junctions between the old surface and the new. The plastic-metal surface will take paint, lacquer, or cellulose finishes.

Possible uses of this plastic metal include repair work on coachwork on cars, petrol-tanks, water-tanks, and water-pipes, galvanised roofs, guttering; also filling flaws in castings, steel drums, farm machinery, boat repairs, etc. Incidentally, the product can be successfully used for repairing aluminium as well as other metal goods. The adhesive properties of the plastic metal make it applicable to non-metallic surfaces, to wood, glass, leather, plastics, or even to canvas.

### A NEW 'TIN'

Many household products are to-day packed in what is known as the composite container. This is a cylinder shaped like a tin but made of board and fitted with metal tops and bottoms. The great virtue of these packs is that they are stronger than all-card cartons, have many of the properties of all-metal tins, but are relatively low in cost. A recent development in this widely-used kind of container is that of string opening. The metal top is seamed to the cardboard body. Just below the seam a short length of cord projects from the container. All the final consumer has to do to open the pack is to give a sharp pull to the cord, which then cuts through the prepared wall of the cylinder. The top when removed can be used as a plug lid during the period the contents of the container are being consumed. This new type of container is claimed to be ideally suited for packing food-products such as confectionery, custard powders, biscuits, etc.

### FOR MINIATURE SCREWS

The handling of minute screws in electrical fittings, wireless sets, and other small assemblies is invariably tedious, and probably only those accustomed to daily tasks of this kind avoid irritation or bad temper. An ingenious fitting to be attached to the small screwdriver seems likely to solve this problem. Briefly, it is a metal sheath that slides over the blade of the screwdriver. It will fit any screwdriver of approximately  $\frac{5}{16}$ -inch diameter. A sleeve holds it on to the blade and when in position the arms of the sheath extend just sufficiently beyond the end of the blade to grip the screw and keep its head-groove held on the screwdriver. This obviates the most delicate operation of all, the positioning of the small screw before the screwdriver is brought into use. This gripping attachment can be fitted on to the screwdriver each time it is required for minute screw tasks, but it will perhaps be more convenient to push the sheath further up the blade, thus keeping it as a permanent yet mobile fitting.

## SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

### A CRICKET SCORING-BOARD

A pleasantly topical development concerns the small scoring-boards used on club cricket-grounds and local cricket-greens. It is perhaps a sign of the 20th century that most of the progress in scoring-boards has affected only the large installations at major county cricket-grounds; the humbler Saturday afternoon cricketers have been scoring at considerably faster rates per hour but the runs have been put up by hand on the same old telegraph-board with its number-plates that hang on hooks. The new development obviates some of the troubles of this time-honoured method and enables the operator to keep pace with the game even when a good many sixes are being scored. The plates carrying the numbers are in 'books'—that is to say, the complete series of required numbers is attached to the board and to change from one number to another number turning is all that is needed. The turning operates from the centre of the plate, each plate being bisected and hinged in the middle. With this system there is no longer the risk of scoring being held up while a missing number is searched for in the heap of spare plates on the ground. Nor are missing plates likely to create the usual seasonal problem, for each part of the board carries a full book of required numbers.

The plates are available in several sizes, the largest being 12 by 9 inches. They are black with white figures and stove-enamelled. Book-series are procurable in two sets. One set provides seven numbered sections for giving the total score, the fall of the wickets, and the last batsman's score. A second set, which is complementary to the first set, gives the scores of the two batsmen at the wickets. Each set of these books can be attached to the normal board already operating at a cricket-ground.

### IMPROVED EGG-PRESERVATION

A notable improvement in egg quality is likely to spring from a new oil-dipping method. The oil will not preserve the eggs for a long period, so the method is not applicable to domestic preservation, but it prevents bacterial invasion during the time that elapses before eggs can be commercially cold-stored. The deterioration of eggs is considerably due to their porous shells, a factor that enables bacteria to penetrate the egg from outside under favourable temperature and humidity conditions. Cold storage is likely to arrest

further developments of this kind but it cannot cure any of the deterioration that may already have occurred. It is now established that the dipping of eggs in suitable grades of mineral oils keeps them in first-class condition between the poultry-farm and the commercial cold-store. The shell pores become filled with oil and this makes it much harder for any bacteria on the outside to achieve penetration. Also, it lessens the rate at which the albumen, or white, of the egg loses moisture and carbon dioxide through the shell, and this keeps another degradation process in check until the low temperature of refrigerated storage holds all biochemical change in suspension. This new development should increase the egg industry's capacity to distribute a comparatively seasonal food more evenly throughout the year. The oils used are colourless, odourless, and confer no taste upon the egg when it is finally cooked.

### A COFFEE-MAKER

There are few domestic subjects as contentious as the making of coffee. One principle seems all-important—the coffee must be made rapidly. Many of the modern percolators ignore this rule, and it is difficult to see how really good coffee can be prepared from a process in which the extract is constantly aerated during what is often a long simmering period. The simple saucepan method is favoured by many coffee enthusiasts but, however fast the heat and extraction treatment, the problem of clarification remains. A new coffee-making appliance, produced by a widely-known manufacturer of cooking utensils, appears to have solved these problems.

An upper vessel holds the raw coffee; the coffee is made in this vessel in only three minutes. The extract then passes through a special filter held in the upper vessel and enters the detachable lower vessel, which becomes the actual coffee-server at the table. During the coffee-making process a large-holed lid covers the upper vessel; this is so constructed that it is also a stand for the upper vessel while the lower part is being used as a server. The whole process—making and filtering—is almost entirely automatic. Both vessels are made of non-staining chromium and have heat-proof handles. New paper or muslin filters do not have to be provided; the filter is designed for constant re-use and it can easily be removed for cleaning.

## CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

### A FIXING DEVICE FOR THIN MATERIALS

The use of ordinary nails and screws is often limited by the nature of the materials being joined. A company, whose name is already world-famous for introducing a plugged screw that obviates cracking in the surface taking the screw, has now produced another novel fixing article. It consists of a tapped-nut bonded into a rubber bush. When the screw turns in this nut the rubber is pulled tightly against the back of the material being fixed. The rigid attachment thus provided will not loosen under a wide range of vibratory strain or other forms of stress. The new device is suitable for thin materials, such as plastic, glass, sheet-metal, laminated and composition products; normal fixing methods have long been difficult for making attachments to these materials. The joints obtained, even upon the thinnest sheets of such materials, are watertight, airtight, and noiseless under heavy vibration. The nut is at present made in three sizes, suitable for wall or sheet thicknesses of .005 to .187 inch, .0125 to .75 inch, and .3125 to .75 inch, with two thread sizes for the first wall-thickness range.

### A BRUSH-PEN

This new writing instrument is somewhat difficult to describe, if only because a new word is required to cover its properties comprehensively. It has a felt nib and operates on a fountain-pen principle, a special oil-based ink being carried in the barrel. On pressing the nib against a surface, an automatic spring-valve releases the desired amount of ink according to whether heavy or light marking is required. By changing the nibs or tips, lines can be drawn varying in thickness from a hair-line to a line one inch wide. The instrument writes on any surface—metal, glass, cellophane, fabrics, waxed paper, ordinary paper, wood, etc. The ink dries as it marks, and is claimed to be smudge and water proof and fade-resistant. Various colours of ink are available. Three different felt nibs, ink, and filler are supplied with each instrument, and at a small additional cost three fine-marking nibs and an adaptor for fitting them can be obtained. This new writing instrument would seem to have a diversity of uses—for shopkeeper's notices, for marking packages, for labelling stock in factories, and for various tasks in commercial art. Its price is not above that of a good-quality fountain-pen.

### BETTER NEON-SIGNS

Neon advertising-signs have so far suffered from some degree of inflexibility. The lettering has to be made up in continuous gas-filled tubing; once chosen, therefore, a message or name cannot be altered. Another restriction applying to most neon-signs is that they must be placed in fairly high positions owing to the high voltages used; to comply with legal requirements they must be reasonably out of reach. A novel type of neon display-sign has overcome both of these difficulties.

The sign is a shallow metal case, glass-fronted and enclosing a ferro-magnetic plate. Separate letters, each made of a short piece of gas-filled tubing, are mounted on plastic bases and the backs of these carry small magnets. The individual letters can, therefore, be firmly attached to the ferro-magnetic plate in any spot—a message can be built up either in or out of normal alignment. The message can be changed whenever necessary. In addition to letters, ornamental devices are also available. The small neon-units can be obtained in a variety of colours and it can be arranged moreover that they flash intermittently if this is preferred to continuous lighting.

The sign is operable from an ordinary mains supply, models being produced for 200-250 A.C., or specially for D.C. A message containing fifty letters would consume only 100 watts. The signs have an automatic safety-device, for the current is immediately cut off when the glass panel in front is raised to adjust or reassemble the lettering.

The low operating costs and the unlimited flexibility of this new type of neon-sign will be attractive to many shopkeepers, to theatres, cinemas, etc.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

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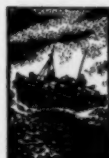
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